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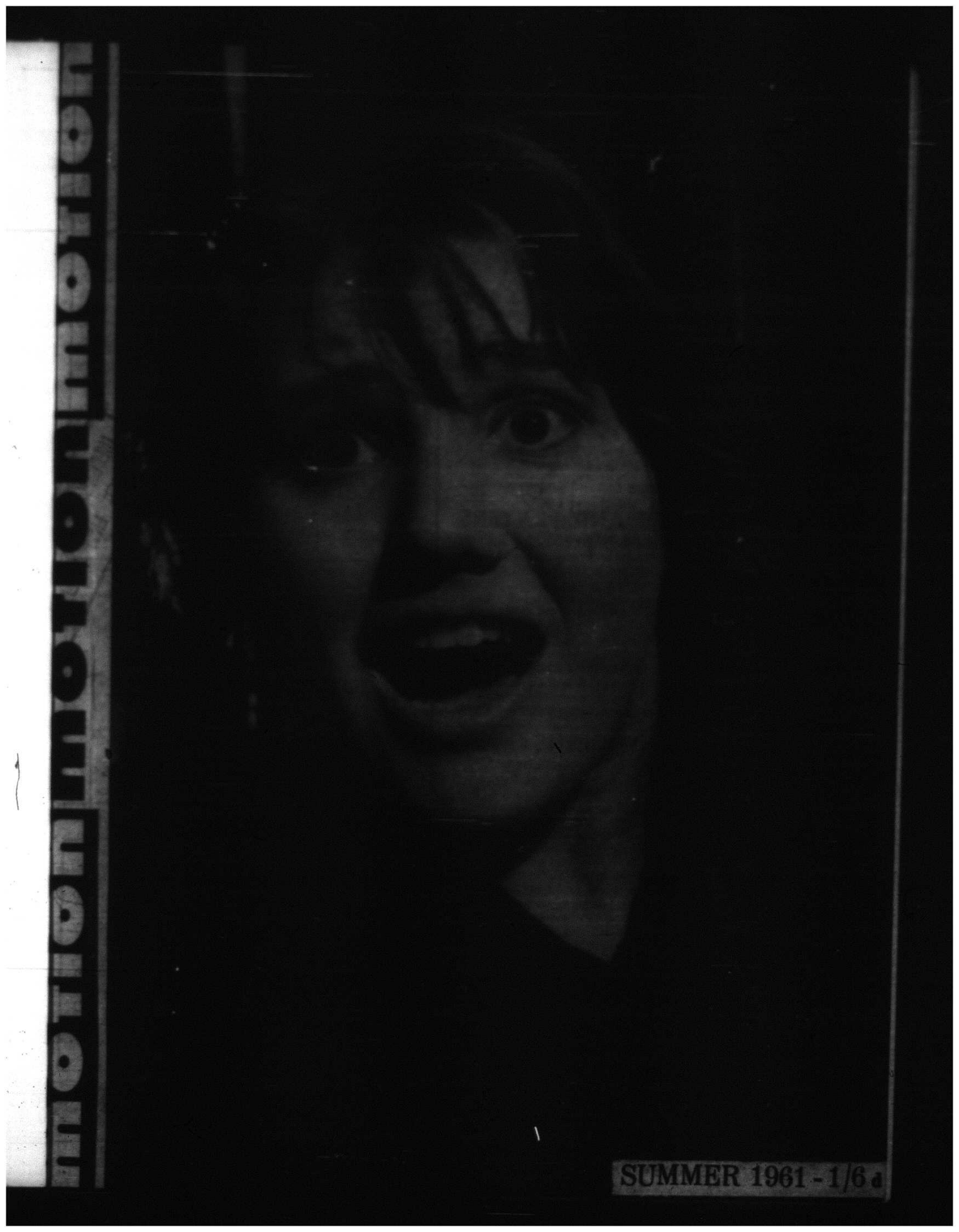

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Cover Photo: Zhana Prokhorento in "The Ballad of the Soldier" (U.S.S.R., Courtesy Sovexportfilm)

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THE UNIVERSITY FILM MAGAZINE

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"WHAT about **Motion**? asks **Peter Armitage** at the conclusion of his article on film criticism, and the question has been common enough over the past few months. "Form and content" and "commitment": these have been the fashionable issues recently, and as a new film magazine—and a university magazine at that—we too have been expected to jump onto the critical bandwaggon.

Like most film-minded students we know, we tend to prefer those films which, in the words of a contributor, approach a "totality of experience": film has its own unique ways of expressing the various shades of the human condition, the subtleties of the emotions, and primarily we applaud films which extend the range of the cinema in these ways. In a sense, therefore, we are "committed". Of course, the perfection and utilisation of form for the expression of these ideals is essential; form must be the vehicle for content. The film-maker, like the artist, must utilise technique in the process of his self-expression.

Unfortunately, the films which stand up to this sort of criticism are few and far between, and for the rest we are content with the old adages: "what does a film try to do?", "how successful is it?" In short the basic question is whether a film is good of its kind.

The main mistake of the contestants in the "war of the cults" is, in their arguments, to take matters to a stage where they find it necessary to erect a single set of standards and to judge films by whether or not they conform to these. Film is too complex and diverse a medium, and one that has been developing too rapidly in recent years, to be judged by unflexible prejudices.

● FAIR AND FREE

In any case this magazine's policy is not to beat its drums in the interests of this or that critical posture.

By avoiding a specific editorial policy critic-wise, we believe we will not only create a more interesting but also a more representative, magazine. In consequence, we haven't been too troubled by our contributors' personal quirks and preferences. Besides, in the last analysis, film is a personal medium; it can be criticised from many different standpoints. We have deliberately set ourselves up as a platform for opinions and ideas of every sort: we do not want—even if we thought it possible—to foster an artificial and transient critical policy dictated from above with the pig-headed notion that we are right. The "war of the cults" is not unlike the current defence debate within the **Labour Party**, time consuming and debilitating, when there are so many positive things to be done.

Our market? We address ourselves to the large and increasing number of cinema audiences which need a lively and intelligent magazine which is neither committed, esoteric, nor heavyweight.

And, of course, we shall be delighted if we can interest a few of the unconverted: the majority who think of the cinema as little more than a cheap distraction on a wet afternoon, or who see **Bergman** or **"L'Avventura"** simply because this is the "done thing".

● SCOPE

Our field is wide, and perhaps potentially our most important concern is with those (for the most part) tiny and scattered university film units. Matters are far from satisfactory: these amateur groups depend mainly upon current personalities and usually split up when they go. Dilettanteism, as well, is often the order of the day: little practice nibbles at this and that, nothing the outsider really wants to see. Of course, there is the positive side to the picture: the student film festivals at **Edinburgh** are always an affirmation of that, and as isolated efforts we are interested in the new film from **Wadham College, Oxford, "A Man of Feeling"**, and (from rumours we have heard) the work of the new intercollegiate unit, the **Image** group.

For the time being we shan't reiterate the need for a permanent film school established by the government or the industry, although we feel the need. Along official lines the most encouraging developments seem to be at **Bristol** where theoretical and practical work are merged, though even here there is room for improvement—a fact which Bristol is the first to admit. And whatever the merits or demerits of the film school at the **Slade**, a promising aspect is the fact that the money comes from within the industry itself, a development which needs positive encouragement.

● THINGS TO COME

We shall be interested to see what trends, if any, emerge from subsequent issues. We have big plans: the next issue will be out in October, it will be even better.

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PETER ARMITAGE, defines the

Oxford Opinion's "new set of prejudices": Aldrich for Renoir. Left: Aldrich's "Kiss me Deadly". Right: Renoir's "Toni" (1934) itself considered revolutionary in its day, now one of Sight and Sound's "house films"

THE WAR

IN the last few months casual readers of film reviews will have noticed the removal of the old hands Lejeune, Majdalany, Harman, and Dixon, and the appearance of Gilliatt and, alas, poor Perrick. Readers of the quality Sundays, weeklies and serious film magazines will be aware of a greater disturbance in critical circles. Charges and counter charges have been made and there have been a number of localised outbreaks of the war of the cults. The smoke has not yet cleared from the battlefield, but it is worthwhile to attempt to define the present position.

The present phase of film criticism began with the appearance of *Sequence* in 1947. At this time things were much worse than they are now. The war and the paper shortage had left the field to *Sight & Sound* which maintained a deadly respectability. By comparison *Sequence* was avant-garde and it set out to be read by "intelligent filmgoers with clear conscience". It was prone to the outrageous: "If you enjoy *L'Eternal Retour*, you may also enjoy *King Kong*, but not *Black Narcissus*. If you enjoy *Black Narcissus*, you cannot enjoy *L'Eternal Retour*. (If you think you enjoyed both, you are wrong.)" This vitality largely sprang from the fact that it was written by a small group of people—Lindsay Anderson, Gavin Lambert, Peter Ericsson, Penelope Houston—who, if they did not entirely share the same viewpoint, could be described as in mental cohabitation.

Long before it eventually died in the New Year of 1952, life had been seeping out of *Sequence*. This was partly due to the fact that Gavin Lambert had moved on and become editor of *Sight & Sound*. This transfusion immediately revived *S&S* and as the rest of the *Sequence* writers also contributed, it came as near *Sequence* as an institutional magazine could. (The advantages are not all with the personal magazine.) *S&S* became and has remained a dedicated literary magazine with the dynasty perpetuated by Penelope Houston after Lambert departed for Hollywood as a scriptwriter. The major figures Lambert, Anderson, Reisz have passed through their critical periods and have been replaced by weaker personalities, but their example is closely followed by their successors so that even those who dislike the standard must admit that it has been consistently maintained.

The seed of the new disturbance was in fact sown by Lindsay Anderson who has always shown more concern for critical attitudes than any of his colleagues. Even if his emotional excesses frequently lead to the absurd, his regular contributions to the critical discussion provide stepping stones through the period. In *S&S* (January, 1955) he analysed the last sequence of *On the Waterfront* and found it fascist, pernicious and hysterical, largely because he simply misunderstood one of the last lines in the film. Anderson was not without support (Kazan is still *persona non grata* in some circles for his alleged submissiveness during the Un-American activities period), but the correspondents who attacked him were more convincing. Presumably this had a catalytic effect upon Anderson for it was not long before he produced another major article, characteristically titled "Stand Up! Stand Up!". Here he introduced the

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R OF THE CULTS

sheltered film enthusiasts to "commitment" and the argument between form and content which had been kicked around all the other art forms since the early thirties. A great deal of heat and a little light was generated.

The committed position was quickly adopted by the *Universities and Left Review* who reprinted "Stand Up!" in their first issue. Some energy from this source and some from students of the London School of Film Technique was harnessed last year in a new film magazine, *Definition*. Resolutely committed, this is more mature and less dogmatic than some of the earlier criticism. It is inclined to peevishness with artists eternally frustrated by a viscious commercial system which denies films having any connection with real life. Consequently, *Carry On* . . . will be castigated while generous praise will be indiscriminately heaped on a bed sitting-room farce like *Look Back in Anger*, the sex, sunlight and cobblestone realism of *Room at the Top*, and a mistake like *The Entertainer*. They are at present trying to remove a smear that they are only committed to Socialist propaganda, and for them the responsibility of the committed critic is "to relate the emotional experience of a film to the realities of the world in which he is enmeshed". The questions *Definition* asks of a film are "What does it say to me?" and "How important do I find it?".

The opposition took longer to get into print. This occurred in the film section of *Oxford Opinion* which last May threatened to attack the "pernicious" *S&S* and simultaneously demolished a BFI publication *Fifty Famous Films*. The time was ripe for such an attack for in conversation it had long been noticeable that there was not unanimous veneration for *S&S*'s house directors and films, and considerable respect for other directors who are invariably dismissed peremptorily. *Oxford Opinion* offered a new set of prejudices—Aldrich, Fuller, Nicholas Ray, Losey, Hawks, Welles for Renoir, Satyajit Ray, Ford, etc.—and indulged in such lost causes as the persecution of Peter John Dyer, the editor of the *Monthly Film Bulletin*. The *Oxford Opinion* writers have been accused of borrowing all their ideas and opinions from the French magazine *Cahiers du Cinema*, and while this is unjust, the more they write the more apparent is an element of perversity. At times their reaction to established criticism is so total that they become naive. It has produced an absurd refusal to make social or moral judgements, and they feel quite incapable of confronting the film's view of life with their own. They have so far only made rudimentary distinctions between elucidation and evaluation. For them evaluation is more important and when it comes to asking questions, their set are "What was the artist trying to do?", with less emphasis on "How successful was he?" and "How did he do it?".

This then is a rough description of the arrangement of forces. I share the common discontent with current standards though there are many mitigating circumstances not usually mentioned. No magazine is so well provided that it can afford to turn down commissioned material which does not fulfil expectations. On the other hand, only very small magazines can be written by an editorial group and manage without contributions, and, though you may doubt it, only the best gets published. The rest is unimaginable; films are green pastures for the greenest of laymen. However, this is no excuse and I am alarmed by the extent to which film enthusiasts think alike and by their divorcement from other intellectual thought and opinion. I know of no other field of communication where it is necessary to cut through so much verbal undergrowth to reach so few ideas.

I welcome the *Oxford Opinion* writers because they represent the embryo of revolt, but I have no confidence in their ability to develop a coherent critical theory. In some cases I am grateful to them for communicating their passion for the neglected and underrated, but I am not attracted by their scribbling-in-the-dark technique of detail collection. I certainly do not agree with them that "the only valid criteria are aesthetic". If a film deals with social, moral or political issues in any degree, I am not prepared to suspend any of my faculties. On the other hand, I am not happy with simple commitment in two respects. Firstly it suggests a concentration upon those films which give an emotional experience of obvious profundity. I hope for films of great truth and human relevance, but I am not prepared to despise, or even dismiss as inferior, anything which does not directly fall into this category. Secondly I find many of the judgements of this criticism too superficial. This is no doubt a reaction to the facility with which we adopt values instilled by a liberal, humanist education. Everything is black and white with ruthless conformity: we pronounce right and wrong without thinking about it. A lot of committed criticism makes me feel lefter-than-thou.

For all their differences, the main factions have much in common and it is the shared ideas which seem to me to be most in need of a shake-up. They are all stuck with an idea of the film as an artistic medium which is inadequate and lags more and more behind the achievement of film-makers. It was developed over thirty years ago when there was a need to stake film's claim as an art. This was done by analysing and isolating those characteristics of the film medium which distinguish it from the other artistic media, and an unfortunate consequence is the widespread belief that the exploitation of these characteristics is "essentially filmic". It is a cliché today to say that the battle to establish film as an art was won long ago, but I often feel that the price paid for cultural respectability was too high. Not only was a corset constructed around the film medium, but it was necessary to adopt some of the more inappropriate features of the criticism of the existing arts, such as the historical approach and the romantic conception of the artist. I do not doubt that many film-makers are capable of making a distinct contribution to a film or that being able to discern this could be of some value in appreciation, but most often the question of creative responsibility is a futile academic speculation of no consequence whatsoever. I would not object to this approach if it were applied with imagination, but it is applied so rigidly that only films with "personal vision" are recognised, and critical energy is almost entirely dissipated in the building up of the film-maker's image (most recently, Antonioni), and the erection of a pantheon to great directors and great works.

What I think is most required is a revision of theory, and the English, it is said, eschew theory: "The governing characteristic of English critical writing seems to be its empiricism, its innate distrust of theory and reluctance to draw demarcation lines". So wrote Penelope Houston recently and she was not afraid to add her own indifference: "I do not believe, in any case, that the elusive will o' the wisp 'aesthetic of the cinema' is suddenly going to emerge; and I can't believe that it greatly matters." Her associate editor, Peter John Dyer, goes further and so values the irrational that he must protect it by avoiding any attempts at theory. Others see any first attempts at theory as grossly oversimplified but do not go on to suggest the modifications and counter-arguments that would build up into an acceptable framework. Unless this theoretical development is attempted, there will be little progress from the stage of baldly stating prejudices.

But where is this development likely to come from? The *Oxford Opinion* writers are no longer with *Oxford Opinion* and they are unlikely to develop anything unless they start a magazine or find a collective outlet. *Definition* is at the critical stage of the third issue and their ability to precipitate a critical advance depends first upon survival. Looking at the past, two points are striking. Firstly, the major texts on film theory have been written by young men, e.g. Arnheim, Rotha. Secondly, the post-war impetus has come directly from the universities—*Sequence, Universities and Left Review, Oxford Opinion, Granta*. What about *Motion?*

Italian Cinema I: Antonioni and "L'Avventura"

Love, Creation and DESTRUCTION

BY IAN JARVIE

ONLY half-a-dozen films have impressed me on first viewing as much as did *L'Avventura*. With subsequent viewings it has risen still further in my estimation. There are few masters of the film medium and fewer still who are revolutionary innovators. Michelangelo Antonioni is one of those rarities. Surprisingly, his early films, recently retrospected at the NFT, show little evidence of any consistent growth in his talent. Rather does he just veer unexpectedly from the moving (e.g., *Cronaca di un Amore*, *Signora Senza Camélie*), to the idiotic (e.g., *I Vinti*, and most of his shorts). One thing does remain constant though; from the start it is clear that surfaces and pretty pictures interest Antonioni not at all. He is utterly wrapped up in trying to get inside people; to expose the working of their minds; to map the mental geography of, and between, people. In all this one kind of state of mind is his major concern: love. Nearly all his films are about romantic love: *Cronaca di un Amore* about the destructive forces inherent in a strong early passion; *Signora Sensa Camelie* about *mariage de convenance* and adultery; *Le Amiche* about love and suicide; *Il Grido* about a man destroyed by the loss of the woman he loves and depends upon (he does *not*, as the synopsis said and most of the critics parroted, commit suicide); *L'Avventura* about our power to love and create and our complementary weakness to hurt and destroy.

Despite similar preoccupations and atmosphere most of the early films fail to come off in anything even approaching the degree of *L'Avventura*. Quite why this is so is difficult to explain; their controlled stylishness gives them a rather passionless air, although they are about very passionate matters. Seen against this rather muted period *L'Avventura* looks as though Antonioni had made a self-discovery; had found how to take the mute from his trumpet and let the music blossom forth unhindered for the first time.

2

L'Avventura centres around the disappearance of the brunette mistress, Anna (Lea Massari—a sulky, intriguing girl), of a thirtyish architect, Sandro (Gabrielle Ferzetti—who has just that right look of successful decay), and his search for her with the aid of her girl-friend, Claudia (Monica Vitti—a statuesque blonde, obviously destined to

Above Michelangelo Antonioni,
Below: Monica Vitti and Lea Massari in "L'Avventura".

LE AMICHE: "Passionless air..."

be a new sexuality). Anna broods of suicide—declaring at the same time a desperate need of her lover (she has him make love to her while her girlfriend waits) and her feeling of complete remoteness from him, as if he were a stranger (epitomized in a superb close-up of her face, expressionless, during love-making). We are intrigued by her and her odd behaviour, and she takes a long time to fall out of mind. But gradually the mystery of her disappearance is overshadowed by the growing love between Sandro and Claudia. At first part of the background as far as we and Sandro are concerned Claudia gradually moves into a central and dominating rôle. Like the participants we find other matters obtrude into our interest in Anna; we transfer our attention to the working out of this complex and hesitant new romance: the blinding effect of Anna removed, we, like Sandro, come to see Claudia differently. We understand her weakness in loving Sandro which has led to her betrayal; we even understand why, recognising that he is as weak and helpless as she, she decides to forgive him.

3

Throughout his films Antonioni is concentrating on the twin themes of love (a creative power) and destruction; he continually juxtaposes them, seeing in the one the tendency towards the other. To fall in love is both to yield to weakness and to gain in strength. To betray love is tragic and destructive. Only in *L'Avventura* does Antonioni allow betrayal to be forgiven and perhaps overcome; only here is the value of love as a way of breaking out of one's mirror cage and establishing contact with other people allowed to override the actions we take because of character weakness and peculiar social situation.

To put these ideas before us Antonioni has constructed an extraordinary complex and rich piece of cinema. First he isolates his people from any incidental burdens. They are all young, wealthy, beautiful and mature. This is why *L'Avventura* seems to reach new depths in the portrayal of human relationships: it is an effect gained partly by concentration and the exclusion of inessentials, and partly by a re-creation of the fluidity and uncertainty of human emotions. Antonioni's camera shows us a world where people feel and change towards others; where the emotional content of any relationship is never stabilised; where the real relationships are between minds. The places in which the action is set take on the intense feelings associated with or engendered by them. Faces and bodies are mysterious façades concealing complex and constantly shifting attitudes, ideas and feelings about people and their doings. The director is clearly fascinated by the way people who are barely able to communicate, and things, which can't communicate at all, constantly influence and seem to be influenced by each other. He goes in so close that every nuance of feeling is brought home to us, even if we don't always understand it we can see something is going on; we are as much affected by the emotional charge of situations, conversations, trees, rooms, railways and the sea, always the sea, as are the characters. Antonioni uses all these things simply for the emotions they can convey; here is the source of the film's extraordinary power to move.

He gains these effects by a consummate film artistry. First of all, in a subtle way, he knows how to use composition of the image, movement of and within the image, and visual background in order to gain the subtlest effects. There is nothing so crude as low angle shots, or titling to drive home a point. There are long shots of people standing on isolated promontaries overlooking the boiling sea; a shot where Sandro and Claudia drive into an empty town which is given an almost unbearable eeriness, as they drive away, by the camera creeping towards them along a narrow alleyway. This shot is cut straight into Sandro lifting Claudia out of the car against the sky and then falling into frantic lovemaking in Big Close-Up against the background of a railway line. If you add to this a sound track which everyone admits to be one of the most naturalistic and delicately balanced in the cinema, then the film begins to be understandable. Against all these marvellous visuals high-fi 'close-ups' of the sea roaring against the cliffs, of clothes and trees rustling in the gale are juxtaposed. The director lingers over physical appearances because of their human meaning; he

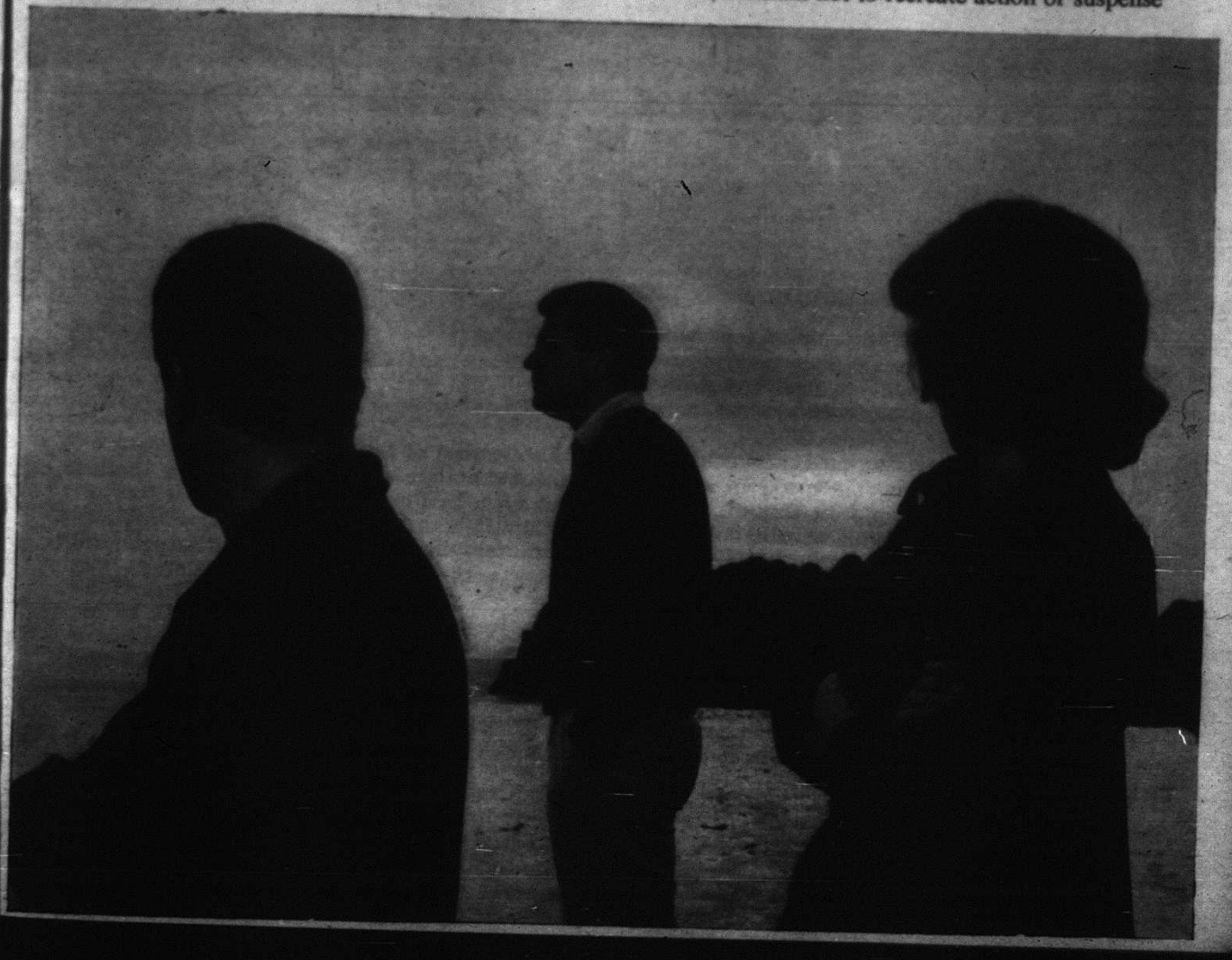
conveys volumes by the way Lea Massari walks, the very stance of Monica Vitti, the way the wind plays with their clothes and hair. Terribly little of the film's meaning comes from its sparingly used dialogue. And finally Antonioni must be congratulated on his casting. His previous films, especially *I Vinti* and *Il Grido*, suffered because the players were obviously unable to understand or convey all the minute little nuances the director wanted. In the cast of this film he has brought together three players who seem to have come into their own for the first time. Antonioni must have been very happy with a cast from whom he could get very fine-grained reactions in extreme close-up.

More typical scenes. (a) When Anna disappears almost half an hour of film time is spent searching a tiny uninhabited island during which the director plays simultaneously on our fears for what Anna might do, our queasiness every time we see the sea, the distress of those involved, and this strange relationship which is growing up between Claudia and Sandro. (b) Claudia, urgently seeking her lover, held in long shot as she runs and runs down a long corridor of the hotel, still littered with remnants of last night's revels. (c) Claudia's utter despair at finding Sandro between the legs of a publicity-seeking starlet conveyed by a shot, taken in the dawn light from behind her head as she stares at the bare, swishing branches of a weeping willow. (d) Sandro in tears on the bench beside her; in close-up her single gesture of caressing the back of his neck; the final shot of them staring at the grey horizon, too choked with emotion to speak.

Because of all this sort of thing the film has been called atmospheric, which is a mistake. Places are realised with a peculiar vividness only because we know so well the characters who move in them and react to them; everything is seen through the gauze of the emotions of a set of people with whom we are involved. Cliffs and streets and rooms come alive with the characters.

4

It is extraordinary that Antonioni should have in any way been associated with neorealism; he is no more a neorealist than Maselli, Rossi, or Bolognini. With *Le Amiche* and *L'Avventura* he has jettisoned even any pretence of self-conscious concern with surface realism and uninterpreted life. Instead he has devoted himself to utilising the film medium not to recreate action or suspense



but to plumb emotions and thoughts more after the manner of Bresson and Bardem than De Sica and Rossellini. But his differences from them are measured by his style. Like Aldrich, Bardem and Bresson, Antonioni pictures have a very recognisable personal stamp.

L'Avventura especially represents a violent break with the orthodox Eisenstein-Pudovkin tradition of sequences and montage. Antonioni discards sequences and juxtapositions; he even drastically curtails ordinary devices of exposition, continuity and linking. His meaning is largely conveyed by one shot or a few shots, although he never resorts to arty images. The beauty of his style arises directly from the way he time and again seems to realise the meaning he wants to put over perfectly. Few artists in any medium can have been quite so precise and (cinematically) articulate about matters so shifting, vague and deep.

This break with tradition can be further illustrated with just two points: lacunae and loose ends. Every reader of Reisz' *The Technique of Film Editing* knows about visual lacunae. Antonioni has always used these very cleverly. In *L'Avventura* he adds to visual lacunae—and actually constructs his action around—mysterious and motiveless gaps such that we cannot infer what is missing (we never, for example, find out what happened to Anna). The effect, like the subtle use of silence in Webern's music is extraordinarily charged and realistic: our roused curiosity remains unsatisfied and we are forced to readjust our mental focus when new events take prominence, thus leaving us feeling we have missed an awful lot.

5

This film cannot be done justice except by seeing it; and seeing it over and over again; because it was 'written', and could only have been written, in images, sounds and movements: film in fact. To such an extent is the film cinematic that one wonders how it was ever scripted; how could they have anticipated catching the mood to such an extent with the surroundings: it seems inconceivable that there was any prior visualisation.

In short Michelangelo Antonioni has presented us with 'an investigation of modern love' which, as Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* did for the novel, sets out for and arrives at new reaches of human experience while making fundamental innovations in the medium. It is without doubt one of the deepest, most brilliantly sustained and compelling realisations of a man's creative imagination that has ever appeared on the screen.

★

Dreams, Fantasy and REALITY

BY IAN JOHNSON

Federico Fellini "Personal Vision"

IN his creation of *La Dolce Vita,* Fellini acts as reporter. Yet like most reporters he is limited by his own, personal, viewpoints of life. For all the claims (both by himself and his critics) of realism for this film, it is shot through and through with Fellini's personal vision.

It is by now almost a commonplace to say that the expression of life in Fellini's films is autobiographic. In *I Vitelloni,* the second film he made independently as a director, he portrays the aimless young men of his youth in a seaside town. In *La Dolce Vita,* it is the aimless life led by a section of the upper class in Rome, to which his life as a director has introduced him. As he himself has said, in a way his Marcello of *The Sweet Life* is a continuation of Moraldo, the boy of I Vitelloni who goes to

llini and "La Dolce Vita"

Rome in search of fortune. Between these two films, Fellini retreated even more to the dream world of his own imagination to make *La Strada, Il Bidone, Cabiria,* and to write the screenplay for *Fortunella.*

Finding that true reality comes only from within, Fellini's genius lies in revealing the dreams, the shortcomings, of the human heart, and relating them to the actual world around us. His theme is constantly of disappointments and aspirations, of the breakthrough of awareness and conscience.

The White Shiek (not shown here) was the first film he directed independently; in it he tore apart the dream-world of the cheap pulp magazines. The *vitelloni* of his next film found only disappointment; *Il Bidone* shows us loneliness longing for an unattainable companionship; Cabiria's hopes of marriage are shattered, but like Fortunella, she finds refuge in her dreams.

In *La Strada,* the topic emerges again, through the personalities of its two main subjects. There is the patient and kindly, yet mentally retarded, Gelsomina, gradually emerging as a woman through her effort to find in herself some affection for Zampanó, the brute she calls her "husband'. She tells him she no longer wishes to run away home, he replies, "No, you were starving there". Finding solace in her trumpet and the forlorn hope that she might be of some use yet to her owner, when Zampanó kills her only friend, Il Matto, she relapses into infantilism and back — fully — to her own private world. And there is the stirring of conscience in Zampanó himself, when waking as from a deep sleep he is brought face to face with understanding and reality.

For the reprobates of *La Dolce Vita,* too, refuge can be found in a world of private dreams. Their very environment acts as both shelter to their dreams and as barrier to their hopes of fulfilment. Marcello, trapped by his own weaknesses and life as a reporter, dreams of writing serious works; Sylvia, the doll-like film star, lives in a dream-world of publicity

and admiration, shattered by the cynicism and bitterness of Robert, her husband. And Maddalena, living, in her own words, like a "whore" has dreams of taking the escape route of marriage and a family life from her empty world; yet even as she talks of marriage to Marcello (set apart in a hall of whispers, as a dream is separated from the tangible world), she responds like a "whore" to the first man who chooses to claim her.

After a pilgrimage from which she had hoped much, but gained nothing, Cabiria filled with bitter disappointment, cried: "But we haven't changed!" And in the final judgement nobody (except one—Zampanó) is forced to change, to leave the comfortable world of the dream.

But for Steiner, the intellectual in *La Dolce Vita*, dreams and imagination turn to fear and horror and the truer reality from within the mind (truer than reality itself) brings the murder of his children and his own suicide. On the other hand, Zampanó alone, of all Fellini's creations, is forced to face cruel actuality without the possibility of escape.*

Marcello, too, is made to understand that his life is cut off from reality. This is brought home to him in two stages. Admiring the intellectual shelter of Steiner's life, and dissatisfied with the life which Emma his mistress seems to offer him, Marcello quarrels with her late at night on a lonely road. He pulls her out of the car and drives away; yet in the clear light of the dawn he returns to fetch her, and to accept life with her. Almost immediately comes the shock of Steiner's suicide. Thus Marcello is forced to come to terms with his world: he voluntarily accepts Emma and all she represents, Steiner his "hero" proves a failure.

Disillusioned, he derides the exponents of the sweet life, yet at the end he wistfully resigns himself to the very life he scorns. Alone on the beach, an innocent little girl whom he once called his "Umbrian angel", calls to him across the sands. But for Marcello, the message is muffled. He wants to hear, yet weakly gives up the effort and rejoins his "friends". He can understand the aberrations of the life he leads, yet he has not the strength to escape.

Too often has Fellini been accused of reliance upon clumsy symbolism. In fact the symbolism of Fellini is complex, because it is so ambiguous.

La Dolce Vita: reminiscent of ... "Fortunella"

There is a scene in *La Dolce Vita*, where a clown plays a sad, sentimental, melody on a trumpet. In one, brief, glance of recognition, he looks sadly yet accusingly at Marcello, who turns aside his glance. This is the one direct reference in the film to Fellini's earlier, more fantastic works. The figure of the clown with his trumpet is, in fact, a clear reference to Gelsomina in *La Strada*. That glance must have some meaning, yet we are never quite sure what. Does Fellini feel guilty at neglecting these funny-sad creations of his earlier works?

Melia in *Lights of Variety* (which Fellini co-directed), Gelsomina, Cabiria, Fortunella, and Emma in *La Dolce Vita* all betray the same possessive, jealous traits of the image of woman as created by Fellini: a creature longing to love and to be loved. Emma, like most of Fellini's women, is forced to share her love with others, yet fondly clings to her lover like a pet dog. Jealous, she attempts suicide; she boasts proudly of Marcello to a stranger in a crowd; she becomes anxious and tries to follow when he climbs a scaffolding. At Steiner's house she says, "Marcello, we'll have a home like this one day, you and me. We get along well together, don't we. We're made for each other, aren't we." But his only reply is a glance of annoyance. And later, in a heated argument Emma demands of Marcello what Gelsomina felt towards Zampanó: "Who'll stand by you if I leave you?" And just as Zampanó fails to understand Gelsomina, Marcello finds Emma's philosophy sheer "animalism... bounded by the kitchen walls and the bedroom."

In the dream of the restless, shifting, Fellini character, home is often a symbol of refuge. And yet, as a nun tells Gelsomina, "we mustn't

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* This is, however, one of Fellini's major failures, for apart from an ending which is prolonged for far too long, the main weakness of *La Strada* is that such is the personality of Zampano as created by Fellini and Anthony Quinn, that the final breakthrough is all but incredible. It is possibly the only occasion where Fellini's, sentimentality over-reaches itself; it is also one of the few ocass'ons where the mind of a subject does not revert to the interior world — at least on the screen.

become too fond of the things of this world. You take a liking to the place you live in, don't you. You even become fond of a plant: and you run the risk of forgetting the most important thing, which is God. And when Marcello expresses a desire to Steiner for a settled life ("your home is a real refuge, you know") the reply comes: "Don't imagine that salvation is to be found within four walls". Home is the imaginary haven of day-dreams, and it is illusory. Fortunella finds a house on the banks of the Tiber, only to have her dreams ruthlessly shattered by the arrival of a travelling troup; Cabiria tearfully relinquishes her humble shack for the illusion of marriage and a better house; and for Steiner, the enclosing womb of the home, and the intellectual shelter it affords bring only despair and death.

The world of Fellini lies half-way between realism and fantasy. *Cabiria, Fortunella,* and in particular, *La Strada*, were each a kind of fairy-tale where Fellini gave free vent to his imagination. But in even more mature, and allegedly realistic works such as *La Dolce Vita,* the magic is still there. There is the night drive with Sylvia and her call to the howling dogs; the walk through the lamp-lit streets with the deep toll of bells close at hand, a mewing kitten, and the sudden enchantment of the music of a harp; followed by the bathe in the light of the fountain (reminiscent of a similar scene in *Fortunella)* and the grey light of the dawn and the wakening of the city (expressed simply, by a single errand boy standing watching); scenes handled not only with imagination, but also with wit. And, as a noisy and sophisticated half-drunken party clambers through the passages of the mediaevel castle, the imagination is suddenly stirred by Marcello's question: "What's that light goes on and off in the field over there?" And the reply, "It's the farmer—in Summer they harvest at night."

And in that last sentence, perhaps we have a clue to the philosophy of Fellini. His greater sympathy is with the simpler things of life—with Gelsomina, Cabiria, and with the farmers harvesting in the fields at night—than with the sophistications and mutations of the *Sweet Life.* He comments only twice throughout *La Dolce Vita:* in the scene of the children who claim to have seen the miracle (Fellini hates the sordidness of man which debases both church and God); and at the end, where a large and ugly fish is washed upon the beach. Crawling with crabs and sea creatures, and presumably a symbol of society itself, with its cold dead staring eye it judges the wealthy profligates as they crowd round it on the beach, even as they judge it. And what better alternative to this life has Fellini to offer? The answer comes almost immediately, for he can offer only simplicity, the simplicity of the girl from the country who waves to Marcello across the sand.

And in this choice of simplicity, we return to the autobiographical feature of Fellini's films; his background as a provincial. For in his depiction of *La Dolce Vita,* Fellini expresses something of the attitudes of the "arriviste". He acts as reporter, he stands back and examines from a distance. Like the characters he creates, he seems sometimes to wish he were depicting another world, a world to which we get little chance allusions: in the little girl from Umbria, the clown, Marcello's father from the provinces. Yet even so, through Fellini's eyes the harsh world of the *Sweet Life* is softened; his recognition of human aspirations and failings is humane. It is this very soft-heartedness which makes the indictment of *La Dolce Vita* shrewd but not savage.

LES MISTONS. Apart from "Les Quatres Cents Coups" and "Tirez sur le Pianiste", Truffaut has recently directed a charming little film called "Les Mistons".

It concerns the actions of a group of small boys entering puberty and their reactions to the obviously matured girl whom them had thought of as merely a neighbour's daughter. The children, their latent sensuality aroused yet fearful and uncomprehending the consequences, pursue the girl and her young lover. In their behaviour and the lovers' is a secure and formal ritual concealing the potentially dangerous and unsettling aspects of their psychological development.

Bernadette (Bernadette Laford) is portrayed with the sensuous unreality that she has for the boys; the camera follows her obsessively, almost caressing her. Gerard (Gerard Blain) seems to meet her,, leave her, with the formal simplicity of a child's perception of events. A perception which has for background the countryside and Roman ampitheatres of Provence.

Perhaps the most beautiful sequences in a film full of visual beauty are the rapidly cut shots of Bernadette cycling, her skirts billowing and breasts swelling, through summer's shade-mottled sunshine. Gerard's final death in a climbing accident completes the child-like phantasy: in psycho-analytical terms, the personification of active sensuality is destroyed by their omnipotent thoughts.

P.W.G.W.

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MIKE TRACEY INTERVIEWS DWIGHT MAC

IN an article in "Encounter" about four years back you made a distinction between the 'professional' critics in America and what you called the 'amateur' critics in England who are amateur because they make off-the-cuff judgements. What sort of critic do you think you are?

I think I am an amateur. Of course I am a professional in the sense that I am making my living by some form of criticism, but I like the idea of a broad range of interests and not crossing the T's and dotting the I's and not going in for linguistic analysis and so on.

Film criticism in England recently has been terribly involved in this form versus content and committedness argument: Americans don't seem so interested. I don't think you've ever mentioned these things at all.

If you carry form versus content very far in either direction it is a false argument, it seems to me. I know when I was first around "Partisan Review" in 1938 this question of form versus content was always being talked about and nobody could ever come to any conclusion as to what was form and what was content. It is ridiculous to talk about the political or ethical content of film and not pay attention to the rest and it's also ridiculous to do the other thing which is done over here and even more in France, to talk just about the lighting and the camera etc. of some really cheap little Western or detective story. This is nonsense. Several far out form critics praised "Elmer Gantry" very much— but I don't think it was very good even to form. I just thought it was a typical overblown technicolour production and very badly acted by Jean Simmons and Burt Lancaster.

Is there such a thing as an uncommitted critic do you think.

What do you mean by an uncommitted critic?

Well, when a critic decides what a film maker has tried to do and then says how successful he has been in doing that and not worrying about the aim itself. For instance if you were to talk about "Triumph of the Will" one could say it was an extremely well-made film and make no other comment.

"Triumph of the Will" was a superb film from the point of editing. Riefenstahl is really good. I think it is the most marvellous anti-Nazi propaganda. Don't you feel that?

Anti?

The intention is to glorify and so on but the reality is not. When I saw all those people shouting Heil Hitler and Sieg Heil I thought this is menacing and sinister; those close-ups! Those porky, beefy, mis-shapen faces of the Nazi leaders. They are the faces of a bunch of crooks and murderers. You can see that. Don't you think so?

Well I saw it 20 years after Nuremberg which makes a difference, but I was still terribly impressed by its sheer power....

Of course there is power but it is as if a gang of crooks were in control of the whole thing. There were some shots of Goebbels ond Streicher

★

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR: "I think he did the first ten minutes so brilliantly".

★

C DONALD

and Goering which you couldn't possible admire. Nobody but a Nazi could admire these people. Were you impressed by Hitler?

I am impressed in one sense. The simple fact that he could make those people do that sort of thing is . . . inspiring. If I were a German . . . well I wouldn't like to say just how I'd have felt or still feel . . .

People were hypnotised, that's all. Riefenstahl shows this. She is so good a director that she produces truth even when she wants to produce lies.

To return to your own criticism, you once said. I think: "the artist is one who can make the likely out of the fortuitous". You always seem to emphasise credibility.

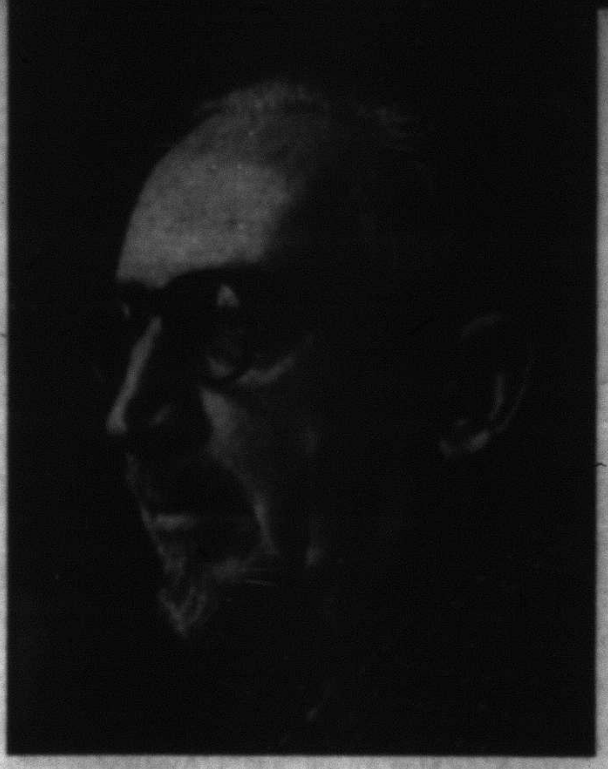
Yes, you are right but I think this credibility seems to be a little bit too modest a word. What about Coleridge's definition of poetry that it embraces a willing suspension of disbelief.' You certainly do have to suspend your disbelief in order to be affected by a work of art. Once you begin to say to yourself "These are just actors and just fellows behind a camera", then you don't have any emotional rapport with the film.

"Hiroshima Mon Amour", a film you admired so much produced just this feeling in me; the posing, the poetic dialogue . . . .

There is a great problem in dialogue in films and as I see it it can either be solved the way it is in "Shadows" which is to make it as realistic as possible, to have people interrupting each other, to have people mumbling, to have people repeat themselves over and over again; or else you do the opposite as they did in "Hiroshima" with the very stylised dialogue, particularly at the beginning. I think that alright too, you can have one or the other. I know the script has been attacked even by people who liked the film. I rather liked the artificiality. In that sense I suppose I am rather on the form side than the content side. "Citizen Kane" is one of the greatest experiences of my life and I have seen it about six times and the last time I saw it. . . . I was just as fascinated as I was the first time because it's an extremely artificial film and extremely good for the same reason.

What do you think of "Sight and Sound"?

First of all there is none like it as good and complete in America certainly, I don't know about France.



DWIGHT MACDONALD

Dwight Macdonald is film critic of ESQUIRE. *After graduating from Yale, he spent eight miserable months as a trainee with a large New York department store. In 1929 he joined* FORTUNE. *Thought this "very good training" but finding himself more and more in sympathy with the communists and therefore less and less in agreement with the top brass of* FORTUNE *he left in 1936. After the Moscow trials he turned Trotskyist and with others wrested the* PARTISAN REVIEW *from communist control. Again differing with his editors (this time over the war) he left, started his own magazine* POLITICS. *This was successful in every way except financially so he became a staff writer for the* NEW YORKER, *spent a year as associate editor of* ENCOUNTER, *and has recently compiled* AN ANTHOLOGY OF PARODIES. *Recent film that impressed him enormously:* HIROSHIMA, MON AMOUR.

"Sight and Sound" tends to be too soft on films; I think that would be my main objection to it. I think that they are at their best when they are presenting documentary stuff like long interviews with directors and so on. I think that they are at their worst when they are trying to criticise and appraise films.

Don't you find that they are a little boring when they to this complication stuff.

Oh yes! Those round-ups of the Polish, Mexican and so on. First of all they are always uncritical, they always exaggerate the importance of it. This is an interesting thing about criticism of films especially that the critic tends to exaggerate the importance of what he is criticising because if

he didn't he would really be out of a profession. I have noticed and God knows these daily critics, the one's in New York that have to produce four or five times a week— if they really applied any modestly serious standards what would happen?

This business of repeating the plot has become a mania wth reviewers. If you notice I practically never do repeat the plot. Maybe in some film like "Hiroshima" where I write a great deal about it it is necessary to repeat it just to be understood. I don't see why anybody wants to know the plot. The critic should be something much more than just a person to give you the facts. The theory in most criticism, especially the dailies is that the critic tells you what kind of film this is without ever saying what he thinks about it; but my conception is just the opposite.

You often use similes form other arts in your film criticism. I've found these are usually misleading.

I see nothing wrong, on the contrary criticism should always bring in other arts. Why not? It is getting another line, another angle on it like engineers do. Of course it can be very absurd and just to conceal any real analysis. I think that "Hiroshima Mon Amour" and "L'Avventura" have a novelistic quality. Their structure is determined the way certain novels are determined, more by the mood of the moment which sort of suggest other things to the writer which he them puts in for no particular reason. You see the difference if you compare that with the ordinary play or the ordinary Hollywood movie where the plot is so important. In a good novel, after Trollope anyway, even in Trollope, the plot is not the determining thing; "Hiroshima" and "L'Avventura" are more free-wheeling, much less predictable.

I will give you that some of the way but in "Hiroshima" the main fault about it was to me that these things were terribly familiar. It was "deja vu", in a poetic dress but just cliche. For instance take the scene in the cafe. This was terribly melodramatic.

But it was terribly funny too. This shows what a great artist Resnais is. It was funny the way this ridiculous Japanese gigolo comes over and in English tries to scrape up an aquaintance with her. It is true that the poor architect looked at her with burning eyes and I think that the weakness of the film is his character. He is too passive and much too much just a mere foil for her. I thought it was marvellous to bring in this perfectly accidental and realistic bit of the Japanese man-about-town trying to pick her up.

All right, this was novelistic in one sense but the first ten minutes of the film is plain propoganda and very effective as such. How does this tie into the rest of the film?

It didn't. You could have cut all of that off— I suppose that is the really great structural weakness of the film. It was only connected in a purely intellectual way in the sufferings of the Japanese people under the Atom bomb were analogous to her sufferings in the cellar and having her hair shaved and that the moral is that men are related to each other as brother individuals and not related as hostile members of vast nations. That seems to be the point there, but I agree it takes an awful big wrench to get it in but I forgive him because that I think he did the first ten minutes so brilliantly.

I've got a quote here I'd like to get an American opinion on: "The British film industry is a world-wide laughing stock. It is becoming a poor man's Hollywood with neither the financial or technical expertise of the American industry nor the possibilities for artistic individuality present in France or Poland". What do you think? Is this exaggeration?

No I think there's a lot in that. I think the British do fall between Hollywood and the continent. It is true that they don't have the slickness or if you want to be flattering you can say the technical proficiency of Hollywood and at the same time they don't seem to have the flicker you often get in European films of an individual artist trying to say something to you. So in that sense I think it is true. It is certainly true of a great many of those inane comedies like "Carry on Nurse".

You see those, —they come to America do they?

Yes, in fact I think "Carry on Nurse" is the one that has been playing to packed houses all over America. It has been making an enormous amount of money in America.

It makes me squirm. What about more serious British efforts? "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning" for instance?

As far as I know I am the only critic in London who didn't like the film and the only reason, here we get into this form and content I suppose, and the reason I didn't like it was because I felt that as a piece of movie making it was not particulary interesting. I saw that other film called "We are the Lambeth Boys" which was one of the dullest

Hiroshima Mon Amour: "Novelistic quality"

documentaries I have ever seen in my life. Did you like them?

Yes.

Well I think the reason you all liked both these films is because they show lower class, working class, life without any pathos or comedy melodrama, just straight- and this is a very unusual thing. It's a new thing over here, but not to somebody from America where we don't have this class problem particularly and anyway we have had this sort of thing since Dreiser, for three generations or maybe even before that. It is of no interest to me that this is a realistic picture of working class life. Why is it any more interesting than upper class life?

He doesn't do much with the medium, he does it almost entirely by dialogue and some of those dialogues seem to go on for ever. When those two guys are fishing and talking over their philosophies of life... this is not what you do. Look what Resnais does in a fifth of the time. The cinema is something which shows you visual things— it doesn't just go back and forth like a faithful dog from this speaker to this speaker to this speaker.

Why not? Bergman does the same thing because he wants to analyse people.

Bergman gives you a hell of a lot more to look at all the time. Bergman is rather over-rated, but in "Wild Strawberries" he gives you wonderful things to see whereas Reisz doesn't give anything at all. What do you remember from "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning" except the extremely expressive face of Albert Finney? Now another director could have got all kinds of cross currents, all kinds of subtleties, peculiar things out of him. Whereas here he was just a very good picture of a straight slam banging, self confident ordinary worker— that's all he was!

I don't know if its because we are much further away, but I think you're a bit too hard on Hollywood.

I know, everybody over here thinks this. I think you probably have, the French have it particularly, a certain nostalgia and sentimentality about things American and so on and if you live in America you don't feel this. There is a tendency to accept all kinds of films which I would think are just more of Hollywood's boring things, and to see all kinds of undertones in it. André Gide's reaction to detective stories is an example. When he was liberated in Algeria by the Americans the first question he asked was where can I get a copy of "Red Harvest" by Dashiel Hammett? I've heard that its Fantastique. That is all he think of!

Sometimes I get the feeling that you think there is a psychological block which prevents Americans making good films, but is seems to me that their hands are tied by economic circumstances.

Yes, of course I should have made that clear. The ironic thing about Hollywood is that the growth of the so-called independents where the stars and the directors get their own finance and make the film for themselves has made so little difference. Of course my explanation is that they have been used to working in the old manner and they are still unconsciously writing the same way and I think that only the new generation of people...

Mankiewicz says that he can always make the pictures he wants to...

I don't see any difference between his pictures and the rest. Well I mean they are slicker and he is a more clever director than others but still they are essentially just the same kind of thing. I think that "Suddenly, Last Summer" was, in fact, over directed.

People must often say to you 'Well you know, people only go to the cinema to enjoy themselves and relax.' Millions found "Ben Hur" enjoyable— them don't you think that your criticism is really in a sense a little out of place? Nobody would think of giving a book of Erle Stanley Gardner to Cyril Connolly to review. As a serious film critic why don't you just ignore "Ben Hur" and why not just criticise serious films? I can appreciate films on different levels— you don't seem to be able to— you have the same standards for everything.

First, I do like what you might call good-bad films —like Hollywood's good-bad girl. Some B movies are often far more entertaining, and better done, than more presentation films. "The Sundowners" and "Tunes of Glory" are two recent examples.

Second, the reason that I took up "Ben Hur" was that almost all the other critics, in America praised it to the skies. It was extraordinary. The "New Yorker" was the only one that was contemptuous of it so I thought from that point of view it would be interesting. Anyway I am not only a critic I am a journalist that means you think of news that will arouse attention and make people talk and God knows this did. Of course it was because I put in that remark about the Jews being responsible for the crucifiction of Christ— I said it was, therefore, not fair to blame it on the Romans, to make them the fall goys so to speak, and it was not that way in the Bible and I was also tadless enough to say it is because there no ancient Romans around now but lots of living Jews. Well really you should have seen it! I had something like 150 letters all taking the same line that I was a Fascist or that I was identified with the people who killed the Jews.

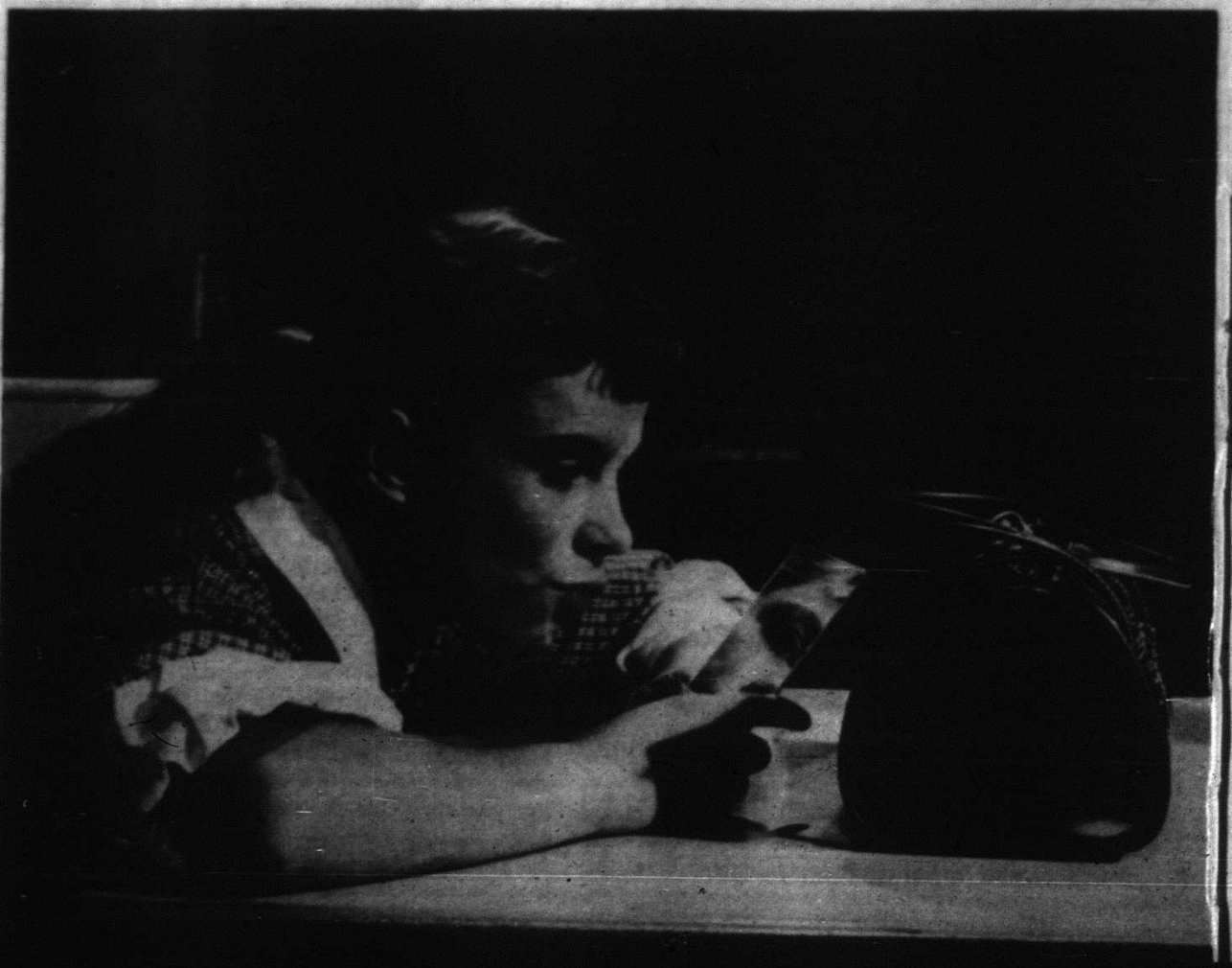
This is the sad thing about the critics life that he makes some remark like this which I think is perfectly justified and instead of what he said about the movie, this sort of thing arouses all the passion. This is the trouble with our whole mass culture, that people react on much too primitive a level to things.

THE critical reaction against Ingmar Bergman's work has been inevitable. He has produced such a diversity of films in less than fifteen years that many have not been able to stomach his success. He would probably possess a higher position among critics if he had, like Bresson or Dreyer, allowed long intervals to elapse between his films. *So Close to Life*, winner of two major prizes at Cannes in 1958, has only recently been shown in England, but it furnishes important and triumphant proof of Bergman's versatility, and of his ability to compose his works with a precision that makes use of only the vital elements of the theme. *The Virgin Spring*, shot mostly in the forest of Dalarna in the summer of 1959, is a logical continuation of the rigid technique used in *So Close to Life*. In both works the dialogue is sparse, every image contains, foreshadows, or recalls every other image, and the whole is edited with the utmost simplicity and flawlessness. Each film has been scripted by Ulla Isaksson, and I will try to show in this article how much Bergman's productions have been influenced by her writing.

The action of *So Close to Life* takes place in a maternity hospital, where three women are pregnant in the same ward. Cecilia (Ingrid Thulin) loses her child after a miscarriage; Stine (Eva Dahlbeck), a confident, earthy girl whose son dies at the moment of delivery ("On the threshold . . . life failed him" comments the doctor impassively); and Hjördis (Bibi Andersson), a young girl who watches and shares the agonies of her two companions and thus summons up courage to bear her own unwanted child, sired by a boy-friend who will accept no responsibility.

EARLIER THEMES

The film recapitulates many of the themes inherent in Bergman's earlier works. Hell exists on earth, and life is nothing more than the involvement of Mankind in that hell; but, as the husband says in *Thirst*, "hell together is better than hell alone", and the three women extract comfort from each other's company. At the close of the film, Cecilia agrees to attempt a reconciliation with her husband. This is a restatement of Bergman's conviction that life can only be endured by means of love between two people, who can thereby escape the "dirty mess" of existence in moments of supreme happiness. The realistic atmosphere of



"I am caught in a conflict — a conflict between my need to transmit a complicated situation through visual images, and my desire for absolute clarity".
Ingmar Bergman

Resolving the CONFLICT

BY PETER COWIE

THE VIRGIN SPRING

the film is a concomitant of the earlier Bergman theory (propounded in *Lesson in Love* [1953]) that woman is much better fitted to cope with life than man, simply because she has the faculty of motherhood—of tangible creation—and therefore she will be more interested in reality than in philosophical and metaphysical dilemmas. Besides, it is only the people who philosophise about the problems presented by death that perish, like the Knight and the Squire in *The Seventh Seal*; and all that Cecilia, Stine and Hjördis can do is to accept their condition and to struggle towards their sole reward—childbirth.

The film is like all Bergman's recent works in that the action unfolds within the space of 24 hours; but whereas *The Seventh Seal*, *Wild Strawberries*, and *The Virgin Spring* finish on a note of fulfilment, *So Close to Life* ends hopefully but with many issues unresolved. It is not known if Hjördis will in fact have her baby in happiness and if the father of the child will be persuaded to return to her; it is only vaguely indicated that Stine will have a successful delivery from her next pregnancy; and it is similarly uncertain whether or not Cecilia will be able to rekindle the love between her husband and herself.

The style of the film is as strictly utilitarian as Isaksson's scenario. Bergman has deliberately eschewed all technical tricks, including his propensity to dream sequences and flashbacks, which would mar such a naturalistic subject. The scarifying close-ups are without exception rigorously subjective; the cutting (the art of this film depends on camera *position* rather than camera *movement*) matches the short ejaculated sentences of dialogue; and dissolves are used between scenes more frequently than in any other Bergman film, usually following close upon strong effects and thus maintaining a realistic atmosphere throughout. There is not the faintest trace of music, except from the Sister's wireless which tends to heighten, rather than diminish, the atmosphere at one particular point. Inanimate objects, such as the clocks on the walls and the rubber gloves of the surgeon, make their point within the visual flow, without being accentuated unduly. They are part of the drama, just as in *The Virgin Spring* the birch-sapling, and Karin's precious robe are vital to the theme.

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Ulla Isaksson, although her work at root appears to have a strong religious streak (even in *So Close to Life*, Stine, while joyfully expecting her child, turns dramatically to the Sister and quotes from the Bible—"Yea, a sword shall pierce thy soul" as a sudden fear strikes her that all may not go well) like that of Bergman himself, has considerably affected both this film and *The Virgin Spring*. The basic innovation in the two works seems to be a warmth in human relationships. It is the consolation and courage which the three women freely give to each other in the hospital that is stressed,

rather than the sinister misunderstandings and conflicts between Cecilia and her husband, and between Hjördis and her boy-friend. In any case, the dark overtones of both these estrangements are lightened considerably by the exuberant happiness of Stine and her husband (Max von Sydow). All this is in direct contrast to Bergman's earlier naturalist film, *Journey Into Autumn* (1954), which he scripted himself. The only link between the two works is in a telephone conversation: when Hjördis rings up her boy-friend, she finds a similar coldness and aloofness to that noticed by Suzanne when she calls Henrik on her arrival in Göteborg. Apart from this the fate of the relationships is entirely different. In *Journey*, the hopes of the four leading characters are all frustrated; suicide would be too easy a way out, and so they continue to live, imprisoned in their hellish existence. In *So Close to Life*, Cecilia and Stine have endured the most ghastly experiences, but they are encouraged by their own stoicism, the humanity of Sister Brita, and the comfort of Hjördis, to accept the arbitration of nature and to continue to make the most of their lives. For, as her husband's sister says when she visits Cecilia in hospital, "true aloneness is a juggling act, and behind it lurks a constant fear". None of these women will ever discover the secrets of life—of birth—but the very quest for that knowledge provides its own justification.

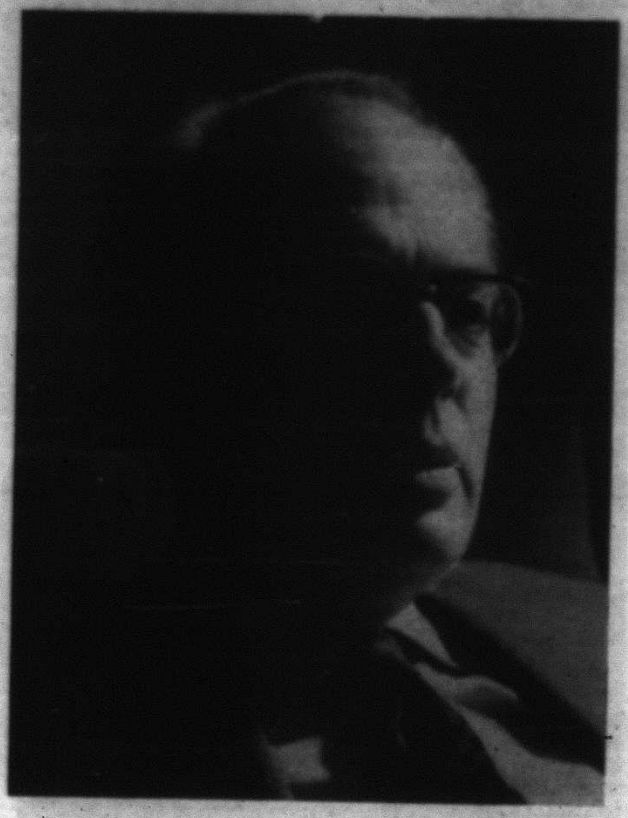
MORAL DOCUMENT

Ulla Isaksson has made her screenplay much more objective and much more sympathetic than Bergmann would have done, and it is significant that there is not only a brightening in Bergman's philosophy in *So Close to Life*, but also a greater ease in the exposition of his ideas. He has admitted that when writing a script, "I am caught in a conflict—a conflict between my need to transmit a complicated situation through visual images, and my desire for absolute clarity." That this conflict has been harmoniously resolved thanks to Isaksson becomes more obvious when *The Seventh Seal* (1956) is compared with *The Virgin Spring*.

THE SEVENTH SEAL

The earlier film is an essay on Death—Death who ends all and from whom only the most simple beings escape. The mood is of profound depression and the feeling generated at the close of the film is one of finality: "It is the end" (Christ's last words on the Cross) murmurs Gunnel Lindblom, as she drops on her knees before the black-robed Master. *The Virgin Spring*, however, finishes with the prospect of a church being built to atone for the savage revenge which Töre has taken for his daughter's murder. It is a constructive end, just as in *So Close to Life* Cecilia is persuaded to try and mend her marriage, and Hjördis is returning to a mother who has forgiven her for her wrongs. In *The Virgin Spring* there is no sense of the characters being enmeshed in toils that they cannot discern but which drag them down inexorably; instead they respond to the actions of the film in an entirely logical and ritualistic manner. This is epitomised in the *sauna*—fire and water—with which Töre cleanses himself in preparation for killing Karin's murderers. The dialogue is spasmodic and formal—"Bring me the slaughtering knife", says Töre to his step-daughter. This makes for a much more straightforward and comprehensible narrative flow, and whereas Bergman's script in *The Seventh Seal* is much more profound simply because it embodies his own doubts, hopes, and convictions, that of *The Virgin Spring* conveys much less the impression that the characters are being *used* by the director to say what he wishes. These are more genuine historical figures. They are less voluble, yet their actions are nonetheless positive. As a result, the film is a great moral document, treating in esence the thirteenth-century conflict betwen Christianity (summarised in Töre's final atonement) and paganism (represented in his calculated revenge).

The film is, with *So Close to Life*, Bergman's simplest work. That this is partly due to the strictly dramatic form of Ulla Isaksson's writing is obvious; but to detract from Bergman's skill by saying so would be a perversion. His technical imagination and craftsmanship alone are superior to those of any other director today, with the possible exceptions of Resnais and Kurosawa. He has deliberately concentrated on making both these films completely *visual*. In so doing he has shown that he possesses discipline, perhaps the most important attribute of a great director.



THOROLD DICKINSON

5 YEARS... AND THEN?

ASKS Margaret Stone

University film 1.

"IT'S incredibly difficult to know," Mr. Dickinson commented when he was asked how he plans to develop the newly-established film study department at the Slade School. And the overall plan would seem incredibly vague.

The department of film study, to run for a trial five years, is the brain child of the British Film Institute and was conceived without a purpose or pattern. The venture was sponsored by the British Film Producers' Association, the J. Arthur Rank Group Charities and the Associated British Picture Corporation, and all responsibility was relegated to the B.F.I.

It was decided that Thorold Dickinson, an established and authoritative director and script-writer—he directed *Gaslight*, *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer* and, for U.N.O. in 1959, *Power Among Men*—should be supervisor to the two full-time postgraduate students. The scheme felt it could only support, at the moment, two students each with the adequate grant of £600 p.a.

NO DEPRIVATION

Nonetheless there was to be no deprivation, and all University College students (the Slade is in U.C.) are welcomed to attend lectures and classes and anyone else may enrol at U.C. as a part-time student and belong to the department. Anyone seeking further qualifications is discouraged: you end up as you began—no diploma, no letters behind your name—but you can now appreciate the film plus having gained a little technical filming knowledge.

Contrary to what one might expect, or even hope for, this is not a technical school. There is a difference of opinion about university film schools: U.F.M.A. in their programme for the student films shown in Edinburgh say, "We are not yet as fortunate in the U.K. as some European and Communist countries, or as in the U.S.A., where schools of such a nature exist"; Mr. Dickinson considers there have been "appalling blunders" in these fields, and believes there is far more educational value in his theoretical course at the other extreme.

Because it was not designed as a practical technical school there are few facilities for practical work. Yet it is not entirely barren (practically speaking): working in co-operation with the scientific departments, the school is producing short educational films on science, mainly the history of science.

Another aspect of this co-operation is that when the cameras are not being used for the scientific films, they are available to the Slade. With this in mind, the department will be mov-

ing to Gordon Street sometime this term where the facilities for filming will be better.

At the moment, one of the postgrads is preparing shorts to test audience reaction: from how much the eye and the memory will retain after a certain period, to the effect of subliminal flashes.

NEW FIELD

Mr. Dickinson flew in from New York on a Friday to take up his appointment at the Slade on the Monday: a completely new field needing completely new ideas.

Foremost in his mind was the question, "Why am I excited by the study of the film?", and as film study is not a private stimulus, why other people too are excited by the cinema.

This was the starting point of the whole course of study, and with this question constantly behind the scenes, Dickinson and his two postgraduates experimented. Experimented in the pleasant, maybe dilettantish way, of looking and talking, talking and looking.

A standard had to be set to keep the course in gear, and like most new ventures—optimistic and feeling the sky near at hand—they chose the purest form of cinema.

The exploration is rapidly drawing to a close, Dickinson thinks. The end is in sight. That anyone is entitled to decide which is the purest form of cinema is a different matter, but at the Slade they do recognise the relativity of opinion.

The winnowing process begins, when in the nearby Physics Lab. a carefully selected film is shown. When I was there, the afternoon's film was to be *Los Olvidados;* previous ones had been *La Terra Trema, Pather Panchali* and *Citizen Kane*. The next day the students will all meet in Mr. Dickinson's basement room for a seminar on the film. This is the most important part of the whole course for them.

"MENTAL HUMAN NEED"

It is primarily a group of interested people discussing the previous day's film, comparing it with others they may have seen, and to sum up, minutely analysing it. This analysis of the film is the formation of the student's ideas and theories. It is here that his film education begins. Contrary to what some might think, this is not producing a batch of new film critics. The analysis is not supposed to approximate to criticism, although it is difficult to separate the two notions entirely.

The breaking up process is an attempt to find the justification of the cinema; to answer their question why film study excites them, and to discover why Jack Smith, the man in the street goes to the cinema. No longer believing that watching a film is a form of escapism, another answer has to be found. The Slade are concentrating on finding out why there is a "mental human need" which can only be supplied by the cinema.

This nebulous programme does encompass other aspects of the film. The various influences on the development of the film might be traced one day, and on another what the motive for the film was, and whether it has been successfully accomplished.

Believing that films will not fit into neat and tidy pigeon holes, Mr. Dickinson in his seminars does not categorise each film as belonging to such and such a movement. Instead, still striving for the absolute he directs his students to discovering what was the accident which made *this* an outstanding film, and what was the slip in *that* which kept it to the level of just another film. The ambitious aim is that eventually, here at the Slade, they will be able to read through a film script and, somewhat like "Juke Box Jury", decree whether or not it will be a good film.

"LAISSEZ-FAIRE"

There is no real direction of studies. In the seminar, the film is just let loose to the students who can pull and tear it apart as they feel. That the students have a completely free hand is an emphasised fact. This would seem a situation depending very strongly on those present: *laissez-faire* serves a tremendous purpose, and although Mr. Dickinson is there to reject suggestions that are not relevant, it might be more useful to give beforehand some indication of the shape of the seminar. As it is, important aspects find their way into the discussion by chance.

In fact, one feels that this element of chance about the whole department is far too prominent. Mr. Dickinson admits that the whole course does depend on the people there being of "a generous and receptive mood". More than any other University course I have heard of, this film study group is of a dual nature: it is necessary that the students contribute if there is to be a department at all.

These students will come out with no qualifications for a particular career, for this is definitely no training ground for cinema technicians. During the course Dickinson hopes to break outlooks the aspirant director etc. might have on the sometimes heartbreaking cinema. No, the main contribution of the Slade to the cinema industry will be, or so Dickinson hopes, to produce personalities. Filming does thrive on personalities and "characters", but it would be pertinent to ask if they can be so easily moulded?

Continued on page 25

...AND AT BRISTOL

BY George W. Brandt

Lecturer in Drama

THE point to make (yet once again!) about the Drama Department of the University of Bristol is that it is *not* a vocational school.

The aim is not to turn out actors, producers, film editors or floor managers—although it has done so, by the way, in its thirteen years' existence. Primarily it is an academic institution for undergraduate teaching and postgraduate research which does not encroach on the preserves of existing schools of theatre or film technique.

Once we have grasped this proviso, we can relate the modest amount of film, radio and television studies (RFT for short) to the Drama course as a whole. In Drama, the undergraduate's career is the normal three-year affair leading (one hopes) to either a General arts degree (Drama and two other subjects) or to a Special B.A. degree course —this is actually a Joint Schools course dividing time between Drama and another subject (usually a foreign language).

If mistaken for anything more than a whetting of intellectual appetites, this course (giving the main signposts in the development of Western drama from the Greeks to the present) is as hopeless an enterprise as any other undergraduate course. The difference between those other—completely verbal and conceptual—university courses, and this one, lies in the practical work centreing on the Drama Studio.

In this very flexible theatre workshop, purely theoretical teaching is integrated with demonstrations of historical staging methods and experiments

FILMING AT BRISTOL. Bottom to top: Phil Bruns in the person of the Serpent in **Adam and Eve.** Michael Cox, Heather Morris and Royston Brimble in **The Merrie Topers.** Henry Woolf as the Fool in **The Merrie Topers.** And Melvin Percival selecting seedlings for planting a shoe tree in **Do It Yourself.**

in new forms of presentation; by degrees instruction shades off into creative activity.

In our day and age drama means the mass media as much as, if not more than, the stage. And it is as part of the third-year course for Special students that RFT comes into its own. Clearly, RFT studies are something of a stepchild in the course as a whole—inevitably, placed as they are in the context of over 2,500 years of theatre history. The RFT course divides somewhat unevenly into a film course running for a little over a term; a radio course running for a little under a term; and a television course getting rather thin treatment shortly before Finals. Radio and television instruction takes place in close co-operation with the West Region of the BBC, whose film unit is also most helpful to the film course.

The film students are primarily supplied not with technical know-how but with the tools of criticism—an ability to analyse films with a minimal background of technique knowledge sufficient for making meaningful aesthetic judgements. Practical crticism will take the form of writing essays on films currently being shown, or of a close analysis of a film classic under the viewer.

This predominantly theoretical approach is kept in perspective by a certain amount of practical work. This policy of producing one short film per annum, which was initiated in 1957, has been limited all along by timetable pressures (film only being one aspect of RFT, and RFT only one aspect of third-year Special work); by the smallness of film funds; and by inadequate equipment. The one strong suit we hold in the latter line (apart from such fundamental items as a Bolex 16mm camera, a Ferrograph tape recorder, etc.) is the Drama Studio which, complete with a full and flexible lighting setup, makes a useful film and recording studio. Just the same, we have had to fall back largely on makeshift solutions to our technical problems in the three films completed to date. Improvisation may be good for the soul; but I shall not be sorry to cut out this bit of moral uuplift when the Drama Department is supplied with at any rate the basic range of film-making tools as it is scheduled to be within the foreseeable future.

Now what about these films? The policy governing their making is briefly as follows:

1. There should be some teaching value to a film-making project;
2. Each project should present a new sort of problem;
3. The films resulting from the project should have an intrinsic value, with a chance of recovering costs by way of rental fees.

Our first effort *Adam and Eve* was a silent film —appropriately enough since it was a mime film. It was made because of the presence in the Drama Department in that year (1957) of a highly talented American mime, Phil Bruns, who was following a one-year non-degree course of advanced studies. The performance had first been devised for stage presentation; it was in fact part of a two-hour mime programme that Bruns had built up. Our original scheme was to present a triple bill in the film: *Adam and Eve*; a mime compressing the life cycle of a tree into three minutes; and a comedy of the first space traveller to reach Mars. In the event, the latter two items had to be dropped for financial reasons.

The problems connected with this film were twofold: first, the translation of a stage mime into something cinematic; and second, the creation of a suitable background to the performance, which we felt should be infinity, in other words total blackness. As for the first, we quickly came to see that in a performance representing three characters (Adam, Eve and the Serpent) there were a number of linkage moves, ambivalent moments in which the performer glides from one character into another. These movements could be done away with altogether on the screen by means of straight cutting, the characters being kept distinct not by differences of make-up but purely by means of varying camera angles and lighting schemes. The photographic problem of infinite space was, of course, solved by the conventional method of draping the Studio in black velvet. The smallness of the Studio made it hard to prevent light spill which would, naturally, have killed the illusion.

The shooting of this eight-minute film took three days. The opening shot alone represents seven hours' work, involving the co-ordination of camera movement (dollying forward on a tea trolley), focus-pulling, stopping to rewind in the middle of the shot (a single winding not being enough to last out the shot), a lighting change parallel to the action—and the action itself.

The Merry Topers, which was shot the following year, came about as the result of a suggestion by two students of the film class that Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale" would make a splendid film story.

I have since been told that some other groups have also made use of the same source; I have not yet seen any other film based on it. As a scripting exercise, an investigation of the intrinsic differences between verbal and visual methods of storytelling proved most useful. It soon became obvious that the story would need considerable amplifica-

tion and that there would have to be a general evocation of mediaeval life. Some critics have detected a faint family resemblance between the film and *The Seventh Seal* (questions of quality aside); but it is a fact that the film was shot before the Bergman epic had come here. Which merely goes to show, I suppose, that in a macabre mediaeval subject certain Gothic and graveyard images are bound to occur.

The Merrie Topers was shot entirely on location. The West Country still boasts sufficient remnants of mediaeval England to enable one to piece together a composite picture of a village (always taking care to keep the ubiquitous TV aerials out of frame). Castle Combe was one of the major locations; another one was the inn at Norton St. Philip near Bath, a former monastic hostelry and one of the oldest public houses in the country.

Here, in a room traditionally associated with the Duke of Monmouth, we discovered two large, hitherto unknown murals super-imposed on top of each other and largely hidden under numerous coats of distemper. A distinguished Bristol architect looked at them and expressed the opinion that the top layer was Jacobean and the bottom one considerably older. The Ministry of Works, when informed of this find, referred the matter back to the brewery that owned the inn. It turned out that the owners were not interested in spending any money on uncovering this mural. The inn has changed hands since, and there the matter (and the mural) rests.

Working on location was an immense help in welding the student crew into a really effective team. Also, the evocative character of their environment helped the actors enormously; they managed to improvise certain passages which could scarcely have come alive on a set.

The Merrie Topers, a sound film without any lip sync, had music composed for it by Ken Mobbs, a lecturer in Music at Bristol. Effects were used with a certain degree of symbolism: animal noises such as grunting and barking were associated with the villainous topers, bells and wind noises carried overtones of mortality.

In 1959, no film was made because the Drama Department had its hands full in the running of an international student drama festival which kept Bristol in a turmoil of activity for the space of a week and took the better part of a year to prepare.

The most recently completed film is a short satire entitled *Do It Yourself*. The making of this involved, among other things, the problem of lip synchronisation—produced without any of the proper equipment. It is satisfying to have proved it can be done: it would be even more satisfying not to have to prove it.

We have been lucky in outlets for these films so far. *Adam and Eve* and *The Merrie Topers* have both been shown on television (the former on ITV, the latter on BBC) as well as at the UFMA Edinburgh fringe festival; *Adam and Eve* was screened at the National Film Theatre, and *The Merrie Topers* has been run in Poland, Holland and Denmark, apart from numerous club screenings in this country.

The most immediate impact of film work on Bristol students at large has been a general enthusiasm for the cinema extending far outside the ranks of the Drama Department. The University Film Society runs excellent film shows and makes its own films. As far as our students are concerned, there has been a fairly steady trickle or drift into professional drama: acting, front-of-house management, playwriting, BBC and ITV production and studio management, costume design, ASM'ing and so on. There has not been very much migration into films as such. But, of course, the visual education received will colour practical work in allied fields as well. A more long-term reflection of the film work at Bristol will be the higher level of film appreciation which is being introduced into schools by the large number of our graduates who go into teaching.

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But one cannot help thinking that the moulding of the film study department is entirely due to Mr. Dickinson's personality. Writing about the seminars, in a London student newspaper, an undergraduate at U.C. accounts that the success, "has been in no small measure due to the personality of Mr. Dickinson". Reviewing the department as a whole, this does not fall far short of a typical British understatement. Mr. Dickinson *is* the Slade film study department. As yet none of the promised experts have lectured there. But as he himself said — How long will he be there? A new departure needs stimulating and exciting people to help with the foundation work — but they should not become the corner stones of the edifice. This is what seems to be happening at the Slade.

However, four and a half years is a long time: when the experiment is reviewed, there might be altogether different results. At least an organisation remarkable for its lack of enforced direction, cannot be hidebound by reactionary regulations and principles. I shall look forward to seeing just what chance will decree for the Slade in the coming five years.

FIRST RATE SECOND FEATURES

I: PAY OR DIE

By ALLEN EYLES

NOT A major film, they thought—how could it be? Only one star, and not a big one at that. And so they sent it round inconspicuously as as the lower half of a double-bill last December. And so you probably didn't see it; few did. But, as occasionally one does find a film, perhaps only the second feature in an evening intended for mild amusement or a peaceful doze, that proves an exhilarating surprise, so in the past my attention has been caught by such films as *New Mexico*, *Appointment with a Shadow*, *The Ride-Back*, and *Hear Me Good*. Alone of this calibre in 1960 I saw *Pay or Die*.

Its setting is "Little Italy" in New York during the early years of the century, where the customs and superstitions of the homeland have largely survived amongst the imigrant population. One of these is a religious ceremony in which two young girls dressed as angels chant in unison suspended over the street. Another is the extortion racket of an underground organization know as La Mano Nera or The Black Hand. In the film's opening sequence, one of its agents cuts a rope and an angelic figure crashes to the ground with a sickening thud in retribution for her parents' failure to pay up. Lt. Joe Petrosino (ugly, warm-hearted Ernest Borgnine of the wide grin, uneven teeth and sparkling eyes) begins a long battle to overcome the ancient distrust of the Italians for authority, and finds cooperation from a man-handled baker whose daughter (Zohra Lampert) later receives attention from some thugs after he has made possible an arrest. Within a year, Petrosino's special Italian Squad, working undercover, have put the Black Hand to flight, and they—to regain their influence—threaten Enrico Caruso and hence present Petrosino with something of a test-case. By sheer chance, Caruso does not use his car after an opera performance and it explodes without him. Later Petrosino is able to track down some of the accomplices in a further bomb outrage, and guess at the ringleaders' identities. Suspecting that the Black Hand is controlled by the Mafia council in Sicily, Joe Petrosino goes to Palermo where sending back evidence to convict the New York bosses, he is killed in the streets.

The plot on papier will no doubt seem banal and even familiar. A glance at the production credits may do nothing to dispel this impression: a script by Richard Collins and Bertram Millhauser, direction by Richard Wilson for Allied Artists, and Ernest Borgnine as star. However, if one looks back—although each has done disappointing work of late—it was Collins who wrote (for the same studio) *Riot in Cell Block 11*, Wilson who made an early off-beat western, *The Trouble Shooter*, and Borgnine who rocketed to fame as *Marty*. Additionally, the slick and highly professional *Al Capone* came from Wilson, and his association with Lucien Ballard (photography) and David Raksin (music) is one which continues on *Pay or Die*.

Certainly, this film shows the smooth, satisfying professionalism of complete control. But, more than that, is is a minor masterpiece, the perfection of its genre. No relationship, no plot angle, no action in this film has not been seen before. It looks at any one moment ordinary, but as a whole is an experience of depth.

Because the teamwork is nothing short of magnificent, there are not any wholly outstanding contributions. Nevertheless, since the shortcoming of most middle-budget studio-made pictures is the phoney atmosphere (clearly a fault of *The Plunderers* with which *Pay or Die* was released). I would like to suggest that the production design deserves special mention. Fernando Carrere catches (as far as I am capable of telling) extremely well the look of the period, indoors and out, just as Richard Wilson has supplemented it by drawing from his actors that volatile temperament, with its extremes of emotion, vivid use of the hands, and frequent deafening babble, that with the basic ready friendliness suggests the Italian type. The scriptwriters, too, have worked it deep into the script as a stylistic element: Petrosino spits impulsively at the face photographed in the police file; later we see the owner of that face direct venomous spit at the corpse of the dead policeman. Thus both reveal their commonness background in the moment of triumph. Moreover, generally, scenes of an intence peace are interspersed with those of action and violence, indoor scenes with outdoor, and the film moves cleanly and engrossingly to a climax.

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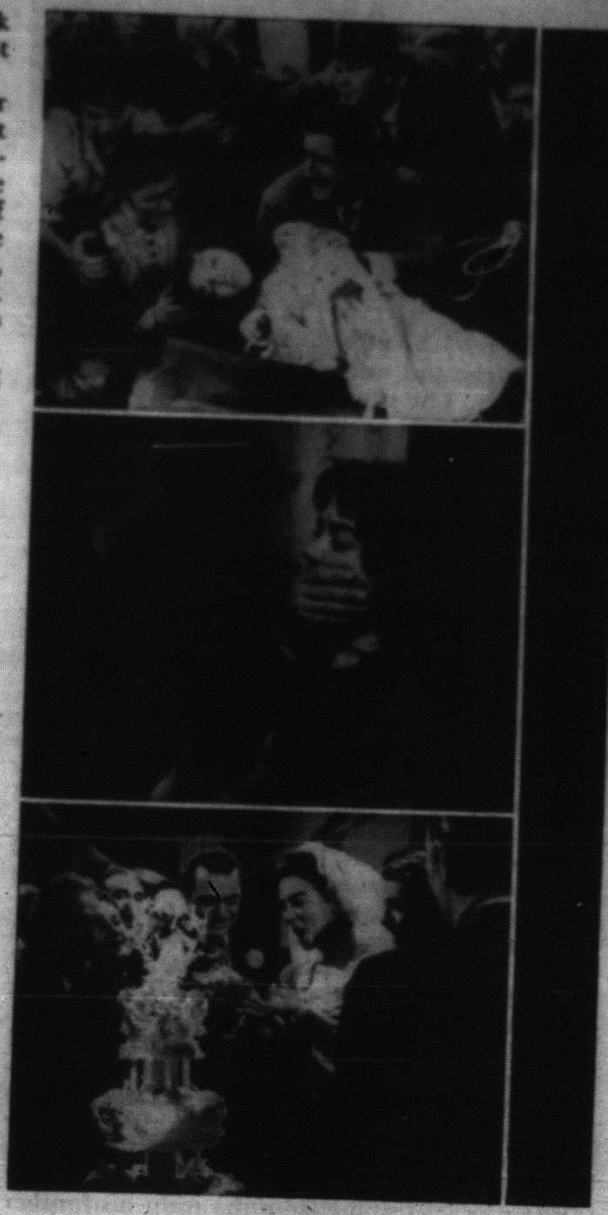
they are—more, or less—based on fact and look it. The melodramatic formula reaches almost poetic heights.

The film rests on Borgine who has just never been better. He brings out vividly every facet of the character as scripted: his lack of education, his modesty, his ambition (to be the first Italian captain in New York), his love of music (here is a screen hero who plays the violin), his fierce pride in his dual nationality, his love for the girl but fears for his own lack of attractiveness, his good humour, and his ready anger. Borgnine takes all these and more, rounding them out to a complex, convincing whole. *All* the other parts are well played, but only Zohra Lampert's is anywhere near as demanding. Where she comes from I know not, but her performance is brilliantly alive.

I imagine certain vaguely felt general impressions of, for example, an abrupt and awkward scene transition and slight plot confusion on occasion, can be attributed to the fact that fifteen minutes of running time has been inconsiderately hacked out for circuit presentation. Even so, the film rates this high judgement. There are, to be sure, some clumsy camera compositions, and the music is slightly heavy-handed at times, but the effect of this is fleeting. and both these departments are generally well subordinated to the structure and purpose of the film.

Its attitudes are conventional, but refreshingly expressed. The film propounds decent values throughout, and its better characters concern themselves with fraternity, good living, a clear conscience. They strike one as ordinary, likeable people. The fear of the Black Hand entertained by the less courageous among them is made fully comprehensible. The film suggests the atmosphere of omnipotent terror that the few men at the heart of the Mafia create through adroitly calculated psychological effects. We only glimpse these men (much as Petrosino does), but we share the horror of the haunting. inhuman spectres that beset the girl in the alleyway; the horror in the nun's eyes after a bomb has killed schoolchildren: the shock of the explosives found among the deliberately soaked wedding presents: or the pressure of the solid ring of men edging the detective off the subway platform. At the opening, the sides are brilliantly epitomised: the open innocence of people at a highly ritual moment contrasting starkly with the weakness of the evil that lurks inside to wreak hidden terror. Yet the moments of brutality keep to their proper place, not making any excessive emotional appeal.



This extra dimension, a trace of real concern and respect for human life, that exists in *Pay or Die* makes it more of an accomplishment than those other excellent, seemingly formula-bound "crime films" of last year, *Murder by Contract* and *The Third Voice*.

I hope that *Pay or Die* has not finally disappeared down the chute of the absurd release system still applied to films in this country. It is my belief that, should you note a revival of it anywhere, you would find a beautiful, sensitive and intelligent work that would well reward a visit.

2: FACE OF A FUGITIVE

By CHARLES BARR

FACE OF A FUGITIVE is a B-Western directed by Paul Wendkos. It was not shown to the press, and not one critic has bothered to seek it out. The distributors, Columbia, do not even possess any stills. This neglect is all the more extraordinary because it is not a "cult" film, for Cahiers addicts only; there can be very few people who would not respond to its beauty and excitement. It can still be found occasionaly on the Classics circuit, and it is worth making almost any effort to catch it.

Some Westerns have to transcend the script. No-one has come nearer than Nicholas Ray in *The James Brothers* to making the basic material unimportant; he imposes his own style, his own preoccupations, but he is still handicapped by details of construction and by the original conception of the characters. Actually Wendkos starts with a superbly economical script, by Daniel Ullman and David Chantler from a story by Peter Dawson. It is built around the very sympathetic character—played by Fred McMurray—of Ray Kincaid, alias Jim Larson, a fugitive from justice who arrives unsuspected in the little town of Tangle Blue and finds that tomorrow's train will bring posters identifying him as the wanted man.

There is no doubt that Kincaid *is* a criminal although he did not commit the murder he is wanted for. The first shot of the film shows him handcuffed to a guard, waiting for the train that will take him off to be tried. He manages to get free without using violence, but just as he is escaping from the train his brother blunders in and shoots the guard dead. He is badly wounded himself and eventually dies; so that Kincaid is burdened both with remorse for his brother's needless death and with the thought of the murder for which he knows he will be held responsible.

In Tangle Blue he hears people talking of the murder and decides to head out West immediately; but the passes are being guarded, and he is forced to turn back. During the day he is drawn more and more into the life of the community. Already he has made friends: a small girl on the train, her widowed mother Mrs Bailey, the town barber, the man who sells him a horse—all of them instinctively like and trust him. He is by no means a hardened criminal, as we learn from his last conversation with his brother: he drifted into crime as a reaction against his father, and when his brother asks if he has ever murdered anyone he answers "a murder, no; a couple of killings, yes". In Tangle Blue he is actually on the side of the law. The town is run by a young sheriff, Mark (brother of Mrs Bailey), a raw but ultra-conscientious law student; he is being defied by a rancher, Reed Williams, who is determined to fence off and use for his own purposes what is in fact public land. It is clear that neither side will compromise and that Williams and his gang will have no scruples about killing Mark. Kincaid comes to like Mark and is enrolled as a deputy; next morning he is left alone to guard the pass, while the train approaches, and he has to decide whether to ride away to freedom or to stay and save Mark, who has just gone off to give an ultimatum to Williams —having confessed that he has never before had to use a gun.

The power of the climax derives partly from the excellent construction, but it is really created by the director. A script can never be more than the raw material for a film, and for all its merits even this script might have been turned into a mediocre Western. What makes the film and the hero so memorable is Wendkos's control. He did not make his first film (*The Burglar*, with Jayne Mansfield) until 1957, and the only film of his I had previously seen is *Battle of the Coral Sea*, an efficient, routine war story which was clearly just an assignment from Columbia. He must have had greater freedom than before in making *Face of a Fugitive*, because although it is an unpretentious film it is a masterpiece of its kind.

Wendkos gives depth to the character of Kincaid by his use of lighting and decor, which rivals Minnelli's work in *Home from the Hill*. The credit titles are accompanied by a sketch of Kincaid's face, across which one bar after another appears, building up a prison effect—an effect which is constantly being repeated in the film itself. Wendkos devises all sorts of prison-like foregrounds and backgrounds: fences, posts, outlines of black, ruined buldings: the strong vertical lines of an iron bedstead; a gloomy undertaker's shop, with the dark framework of the windows. Kincaid's face is hardly ever lit brightly, except when he is near to freedom. The early scenes are all very dark, and so is the ending when he renounces the chance of freedom. Often Kincaid hovers in the background, an outsider; particularly fine is the scene where Mark is married. Kincaid, whose experience and honesty Mark admires, has urged him to marry his fiancée immediately, even though his life is in danger: the priest takes the ceremony in a small room, cheerfully lit, with the couple in the centre of the frame, smiling at each other; Kincaid stands in the left foreground, back to camera, in shadow. All these subtleties really mean something and they

INHERIT THE WIND:

"Mannered groupings"

help to make Kincaid's problem a moving one.

Fred MacMurray's performance is absolutely superb. It is a perfect professional job in the best Hollywood tradition, without a trace of the theatrical gesture or inflexion. Raymond Durgnat has said, very acutely, that the face of a Bresson hero "reveals, not the superficial modulation of personality, but the *bedrock* of character that one might call the soul". This seems to me to apply equally to MacMurray as Kincaid. His is, essentially, the *face of a fugitive*. The other roles, except for an objectionable six-year-old, are very finely played, especially that of Mark (Lin McCarthy).

Wendkos's style, his judgment of when to use zooms and pans, close-ups and group-shots, long takes and quick bursts of cutting, is so exact that this film could almost serve as a text-book for film directors. In the train, just after the guard has been shot, he has the brother lying wounded in the foreground, with Kincaid walking backwards and forewards behind him; it is a very long take, broken up occasionally with beatifully timed, expressive close ups of Kincaid. There is another long take of some 2½ minutes when Mark and Kincaid walk up and down and talk together about crime and about marriage. Not only does this display Wendkos's technical virtuosity but, like the other scene, it conveys the right tempo, one of calm reflection contrasting with the action that has gone before.

It is probably budget restrictions which prevents Wendkos moving the camera very freely; but he turns the rather static quality of the indoor scenes into a virtue by his meticulous choice of angles and groupings. After the dance, Mark is challenged in the street outside by Williams, who tries to provoke him to fight. Wendkos cuts back and forth between them: Mark is in near-close-up, with his sister and fiancée at the other side of the frame, and Kincaid in the shadows behind them; Williams is surrounded by his gang, and all the slight movements and changes of expression convey some meaning—it is a remarkably concentrated scene. When Kincaid is applying anxiously to Mark for a deputy job, Wendkos fills the side of the screen with Mark's back, a tangible expression of the obstacles Kincaid has to struggle against. There are many similar shots of back or legs or heads wedging up the side of the screen, to express menace. This kind of calculated construction can easily seem pretentious; one thinks of the ghastly, mannered groupings in Kramer's *Inherit the Wind*. But Kramer is not a film-director, and Wendkos is. In the last resort one can only justify his technique by saying that it works. Every scene has life and every shot has meaning.

The most obviously brilliant parts of *Face of Fugitive* are the action sequences, which are guaranteed to keep the liveliest Saturday afternoon audience silent. Best of all is the climax. Kincaid, having backed Mark against Williams, is chased into town and trapped in a deserted house. Williams sends in two of his gang via the roof, both of whom get shot. As Williams himself nervously opens the door, Kincaid, wounded, falls downstairs and stumbles against a pianola. While the two of them grope about in the pitch dark, a dance tune blares out, then runs grotesquely down. Kincaid stretches agonisingly for his gun; as Mark arrives and throws open the door he catches sight of Williams and shoots him dead, then collapses.

As in the early scene where Kincaid pulled his wounded brother into a moving train, Wendkos has taken a straight-forward piece of action and, without any self-conscious allegorising, given it a genuine epic quality. Kincaid is a heroic character who has made the right choice in renouncing his freedom. At first he thought that he was only helping Mark for selfish reasons, to divert suspicion and to earn some money. In the course of the film he has discovered himself. As Mrs Bailey has said to him, "you're a good man, I don't know why you try to hide it". The final scene, as written, may seem pretentious, but Wendkos and MacMurray have given such depth to the character of Kincaid that it becomes really moving. Mark stands over Kincaid, who is still breathing; he knows now that this is the wanted man, and he remembers the conversation they had on the pass a short time ago. Kincaid had suggested that the murderer might ride up while Mark was away and that he might get through: "he would be free as a bird". Mark had answered "A man like that could never be free". Now someone compares Kincaid's face with the poster and announces "he's the man we're after all right"; and Mark realises that the law in not everything:

"you might say he's the same man, and then again you might not... We'd never have found him. He could have been a free man. Free as a bird".

A Choc-Ice and a Bag of Nuts...

BY BRIAN HAMMOND

I WAS a bespectacled and introspective child, and it is possible, now I come to consider it, that the sight of me sitting about the place thinking all the time made my mother nervous; whatever the reason, she used to invest a weekly sixpence, plus ice-cream money, in packing me off to Saturday Morning Pictures. Saturday Morning Pictures was a bawling hell of terrible old films with unlikely plots, and the flickering shadows on the screen cast a gloomy light on the mass struggles taking place in the auditorium. It was impossible to hear the dialogue over the yelping and moaning, and so my attention was deflected from the film to the film-goers, who were infinitely more entertaining, anyway. Ever since I have retained a clinical interest in audiences.

The cinema audience is much more heterogenous than the theatre audience. Theatre going seems to involve a certain amount of dedicated planning, long-term arrangement and anticippation. Going to the pictures, on the other hand, is mostly the result of a whim or fancy. The audiences are compos' of percentages of people who want to get out of the rain, whose televisions have broken down, who have stormed out of houses after quarrels, who are waiting to keep late-night appointments, leaving by late trains, or who are present for cultural reasons. On occasion they even include people such as a gentleman of my father's acquaintance, who made his living in the mid-thirties by going to the cinema night after night, sitting in the same seat every time, and unscrewing at leisure all the nuts which held the seat together with his collection of screwdrivers and spanners. By the end of the week the seat would collapse underneath him, and assisted out of the wreckage by usherettes he would proceed to the manager's Office to negotiate a settlement out of court.

The auditorium is also a fruitful field for the student of class mannerisms and attitudes. The touchstone is, naturally, seating patterns. The seating pattern of the individual is laid down in childhood, and can rarely be altered once formed. Those of good family sit at the back, the ragged proletariat at the front. (The middle class sits in the middle). One of the things I shall never be able to understand is why the opposite arrangement is used in the theatres. Even now anything further back than the fifteenth row makes my head swim. The tiny, distant screen, with all those people between it and me. And the permanent crick in my neck, which seems from gazing perpendicularly upwards in youth from the front row, keeps forcing my eyes up off the top of the film. Conversely, children born into the atmosphere of gracious living have confessed to me that anything further in towards the ice-cream girl than the back three rows gives them a strong impresion that the epic is being projected directly on to their retina. It takes all sorts...

Another point of some interest to sociologists is the reaction, by geographical area and class breakdown, to those moments when the projectionist suddenly comes out with 87654321 **Z345678 upside down, in the middle of a torrid love scene or cliff-hanging passage. In the better—class suburbs the audience sits in embarrassed silence until the film manages to get back on the rails. Round the Elephant and Castle, where I enjoyed my first cultural experiences, the screaming and whistling breaks out at the first inverted figure, and it always seems to take the panicky, fumbling and sweating projectionist three times as long to splice the film, or empty the tea out of the projector, or overpower the maniac, or whatever has caused the breakdown in communication.

Despite all this, however, it is not widely realised under what near-perfect conditions the showing of films runs in this country. There is at least no language barrier. I recall a film I once took the opportunity of seeing in Larnaca, Cyprus. It starred, I remember, (and this is all I remember, apart from the terrible weight of my military boots and gaiters, and the strangling constriction of my minute army shirt) delectable Shirley Yamaguchi. The sub-titles were in Greek, Turkish, Hebrew and Japanese. Inexplicably, every now and again, a French or German section of text would waver up the screen. These sub-titles generally ran from the top of the actors' heads. The general impression was of watching the film through a fairly thin newspaper. In order to rest the eyes, the programme was divided into four parts. At suitable moments, the lights went up, and peanuts and and grapes were vended throughout the theatre.

Another definitive point in appreciation of the cinema took place while I was waiting for a boat in Zadar, on the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia. I discovered that the local picture-house was showing The Wizard of Oz. Nostalgia overcame me, and I booked in. Lack of foresight brought me low, however. I spent the first thirty minutes travelling backwards and forwards to the foyer, in periodic attempts to make one of the staff tell me where the lavatory was. This proved so difficult that at one time I thought they were going to offer me money to go away.

Eventually I found it. And standing wrapped in that nauseous stench to the muted strains of 'Follow the Yellow Brick Road' has given me an abiding affection for the British Cinema.

There is a different attitude abroad, too, to the principle of showing two films together. I was told lugubriously in Holland 'One film, one pay. Two films, two pays.' And this seems to hold generally good. Most cinema programmes abroad are nasty, brutish and short; and the need of the connoisseur of really bad B features is severely limited. It is only in Britain that one gets the opportunity to sit in fascinated and intense silence while the second feature becomes *worse* and *worse*. This can apply to main features—*Conflict of Wings* or *Never on Sunday*—but normally the richer prizes for nonsense are carried off by the B's. The attitude to magnificently bad films also varies from area to area. In Camberwell the passage from one cliche to the next will be punctuated by catcalls and low humour; in the more select and articulate districts the critical peak may consist of a single reverberating 'Oh, God...' from the back rows, at a line like 'sometimes... the truth... can hurt...'

The political atmosphere (politics in the *cinema*, tut, tut,) is another point of difference. By political atmosphere I mean what happens in the five minutes or so after the curtain sweeps across and the lights go up on the ice-cream wrappings, lost shoes, entangled lovers and stretching home-goers. In some cinemas they flash the Royal horse and rider, to the accompaniment of massed Guards bands, on to the screen immediately, creating a tense scrum of loyal patriots at attention and low internationalists fighting their way through to the exits through a barrage of Royal glares and muttering about foreigners. In others—the Everyman, Hampstead for example, long may its tiny auditorium be filled—the light music goes on until the place is cleared, and the Imperial thunder and pomp is pumped out to an audience of usherettes and people searching for their handbag.

I will end on a bold prediction. The British cinema audience, though battered by entertainment tax, bedazzled by the gogge-box, and bedevilled by the miles of multi-coloured and wide-screen attacks on human intelligence that they are invited to sit through every week, will never desert the pictures. It's not just the human warmth of sharing entertainment experiences in a communal setting, it's not the group factor, it's not even the erotic advertising. It's the habit-forming Saturday Morning Pictures. 'Give me a child till he's seven, and he's mine of the rest of his life...' The old Jesuit principle working in all the back doubles, reinforced with the choc-ice and the bag of nuts...

TO PERSONALISE AND UNIVERSALISE

MAGIC LANTERN. One of the abiding problems of the cinema has always been how to unify both its personalising and universalising aspects. From the agonising analysis of the close-ups as used, for example, in "Wild Strawberries" to the swirling group feeling of "Strike" is an immense distance and one difficult to bridge. Even Eisenstein met with difficulty here; a general reaction to his early films was that they were impersonal. The Soviet cinema, where one would expect to find the strongest support for collectivist and depersonalised films was forced during the individualist reaction of the 'thirties to produce films such as Donskoi's which, although very fine films in themselves, were much nearer than Eisenstein or Pudovkin to the Western tradition of production.

Here then is the European artistic dilemma as partisan content? The themes of contemporary existence are not to become a mere projection of personal phantasies or the decadent formalism of an "ars-pro-gloria-artis" philosophy must concern itself with content. But what content? The themes of contemporary existence are apparently diffuse, specialised and extremely numerous. "Personal Man" we can all understand and sympathise with, to the extent that we are all aware of our individuality, but atomic weapons, racialism, Marxist dialectics and Action painting are all the spheres of specialists. A little atavistic voice, the echo of the liberal tradition in all of us, tells us to leave complexity to the specialists and involvement to the fanatics. Our answer would be to consider the world as anarchical and simply to admire the humour and beauty that are the by-products of this eternal confusion: this I take to be the view of "Cahiers du Cinema".

There is, however, the other view which attempts to combine reality of character with social awareness. But this has a built-in fault: what treats a character comprehensibly often misses social significance. This could be demonstrated in "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning" where some of the social criticism in the film seems to be lost at the expense of objectivising Arthur Seaton.

In "Magic Lantern", showing until recently at the Saville Theatre, I think I can see some indication of how the dilemma may be eventually solved. This is a Czech production in which aspects of film, theatre and ballet are fused to result in a production which seems to achieve that totality of experience so far only touched by poetry. The screen is moving about the stage, splitting, detailing minutely actors in front of it, provides a continual analogue to the action. It can personalise the formality of ballet or universalise the particularity of a lone actor.

The actual performance, though exciting and formally beautiful, was nevertheless little more than a demonstration and showed all the faults of one. Despite this I still felt that given appropriate scripts this complex technical process could produce a medium which could explicitely the relations between man and social reality which an author like Kaffka was striving to realise. Anarchy might yet be resolved by structuring it and our cinematic "sensibility" reunified.

PETER W. G. WRIGHT.